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1300 BHAVAN (1300 24 28 26)

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HOW CAN I GET HELP?

If you are being abused, it can be very difficult to see how you can change things. You may think that anything you do will make things worse.

It's not easy to leave an abusive relationship. You may be worried about money, where you'll live, how you will cope on your own and how it will affect your children. You may be worried about bringing shame on your family or even being disowned by your family.

There is help available. Ring the Domestic Violence Line on 1800 65 64 63.

The Domestic Violence Line is a free, statewide 24 hour telephone crisis counseling and referral service.

The line is staffed by trained female counsellors. They are also trained to help women who are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. They can help you even if you live in the country or a remote area.

You can ring the Domestic Violence Line from anywhere in NSW, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If English is not your first language, the Domestic Violence Line can arrange interpreters.

If you are in immediate danger (if your life or your children's life is being threatened) call 000 and ask for the police.

Ring the Domestic Violence Line on 1800 65 64 63 – they can help you.

The Domestic Violence Line can help you:

- Talk to the police and get legal help
- Get hospital care and family support services
- Obtain an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO)
- Develop a safety plan for yourself and your children
- Find emergency accommodation for you and your children.

The counsellors at the Domestic Violence Line won't blame you or make you do anything you don't want to do. They will listen to you. They can give you information on what you can do and help you decide on your options. You can ring them as often as you need to at any time, day or night.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

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Domestic and family violence is abusive behaviour by one person to control and dominate another person within a close relationship. It may include physical assault, psychological abuse, social abuse, economic abuse or emotional abuse.

You could be experiencing domestic violence if someone close to you is:

- Punching, hitting, kicking, slapping or choking you
- Using weapons such as knives to threaten you
- Forcing you to have sex (rape)
- Forcing you to look at pornography
- Forcing you to have sex with other people
- Constant humiliation, insults, calling you names
- Threatening to hurt or kill you
- Threatening your children or other family members
- Threatening to destroy things that are important to you
- Threatening to call and have your visa revoked
- Controlling your finances
- Preventing you from working or seeing your friends and family
- Monitoring your mail, emails and phone calls
- Locking you in the house
- Making frequent, unfounded accusations of being unfaithful
- Often making unreasonable demands.

You may be unsure about what domestic violence really is, especially if you came from a family or environment where domestic violence was common. You may even feel that you may be 'just making a fuss about nothing'.

Most often, it is men who are domestic violence offenders. They use violence to scare and control women and children.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TEARS LIVES APART

Domestic violence affects a lot of people. One in four of all women are likely to be subjected to domestic violence during their lives – women from all backgrounds, and from all cultures and age groups.

If you are experiencing domestic violence you may feel afraid, insecure, degraded, angry and unsure about what to do.

Domestic violence causes fear and reduces your self-esteem. You may even blame yourself and think it's your fault. You may also feel paralysed by fear.

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Sometimes women don't get help because they feel too ashamed to talk about what is happening. Or they hope that the violence will stop. Many women fear that if they leave, their abuser will try to find them and seriously injure them. Many women also worry about losing custody of their children. The violence usually gets worse, and more frequent, as time goes on.

Domestic violence is a crime. Nobody deserves violence. There are many ways of dealing with problems that don't involve violence, such as talking about what's upsetting you or getting outside help. The person who is abusing you is the one who is responsible for the abuse – not you.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE

Children are always affected by domestic violence, whether they are physically hurt or not.

Children are often present when the violence happens. They may hear it, or they may be aware of it, even if they don't understand what's going on.

Some children try to stop the violence from happening and get physically hurt. Others may even become involved themselves eg. Hitting mum, or hitting their brothers and sisters, in the same way that they see dad hitting mum.

Children who witness domestic violence may become aggressive, anxious, depressed, have low self-esteem and even go on to repeat the violent behaviour in their own families, or choose partners who are violent.

Abuse cannot be hidden from the children. You may be staying in the relationship for the sake of your children. However, remember that domestic violence can have bad effects on children. The best thing you can do for your children and their future is to get some help.

If you suspect a child or young person is at risk of harm because of domestic violence, contact DoCS Helpline on 132 111.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What about my children?

Children will be affected by the violence you are experiencing. The Domestic Violence Line counsellors can refer you to agencies that can advise you about the legal rights and responsibilities that you and the father of your children have.

They will also advise you of ways to protect and care for your children.

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Should I leave home or remain where I am?

The Domestic Violence Line counsellors can help you think about whether you could remain at home, or they can help organize temporary accommodation for you and your children.

If I decide to leave home where could I go?

A refuge is a safe place where you and your children can go if you need somewhere to stay. This can give you some time to think about what you want to do. You can also stay with friends or people you trust.

The Domestic Violence Line will help you consider all the options available. You may also be eligible for help from the Department of Housing. The Domestic Violence Line will help you find out about this option.

What about money?

You may have been told that you will have no money if you leave. Or you may be worried about how you are going to support your children.

If you have no income, you may be entitled to claim financial assistance from Centrelink. The amount you get will depend on your circumstances. You may also be entitled to other benefits including travel, health and housing.

The Domestic Violence Line can provide you with contact details.

What is an AVO?

Anyone over the age of 18 years who fears violence or harassment can apply for an AVO. Its purpose is to provide protection from future violence, harassment, stalking or intimidation. It's not necessary for an assault or other physical attack to have occurred for someone to apply for an AVO.

Under some circumstances, the police must assist a victim by applying for an AVO. An AVO is not a criminal charge. Partners will only be charged and arrested if they break the Order.

Separate to the AVO, some abusers may also be charged with assault. You may also be able to get a Telephone Interim Order. This means you get immediate protection.

What is an exclusion order?

An exclusion order allows you to remain at home as part of the AVO and excludes or removes the violent person. It is one of the conditions which may be applied for in an AVO.

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It prohibits the violent person from living in the home of the protected person. An exclusion order refers to excluding the violent person from the home where both parties are, or have been living.

WHY SOME WOMEN LIVE WITH VIOLENCE

Why doesn't she tell someone?

Some women keep the violence a secret for reasons such as:

- Fear of judgement or an unsympathetic response
- Fear that people will blame her
- Fear that the violence will worsen if outsiders get involved
- Worry about her future if she leaves her abuser - she may think she will not be able to cope, or may be financially dependent
- Guilt, shame or because she's made to feel that she's responsible for the violence
- She may still love her partner, and hope that he will change
- Cultural reasons that prevent her from disclosing the abuse
- Fear that her children will be taken into care.

A woman may also fear that once she discloses violence, things will be taken out of her control. Knowing how to ask for help is the first step to safety.

Why don't abused women leave?

Some women may stay in violent relationships for years for reasons ranging from love to terror. For example, a woman may:

- Still care about her partner and hope that he will change
- Feel ashamed about what has happened or believe that it's her own fault
- Be scared that he will try to kill her or her children if she tries to leave or seek help
- Not know where to go, how to get money or how to protect her children
- Be worried about being sent back to her original country if she is an immigrant.

HELPING OTHERS

By helping someone who is experiencing domestic violence you could save many lives.

Many women find it difficult to talk to anyone about their abuse. A woman's partner may not even let her out of his sight. She may not know how to seek

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help. You may be able to help by ringing the Domestic Violence Line on her behalf.

Detecting domestic violence and taking appropriate action can save lives. By understanding more about domestic violence, you will be more able to help your friend or family member.

Supporting someone who experiences Domestic Violence *The right response can change lives*

How to recognize if your friend or a family member is being abused?

Has a friend or family member approached you and talked about being abused? Do you know someone close to you who is being abused and who you want to help? Do you suspect that a friend or family member is being abused and you are not sure what to do?

This will give you some answers to your questions.

Following are some signs that can indicate if someone is experiencing domestic violence. Your friend or family member may:

- Seem afraid of her partner or is always very anxious to please him
- Stop seeing friends or family
- Stop her phone calls when her partner comes into the room
- Say her partner continually phones or texts her when she is out of the house
- Say her partner is 'jealous' and 'possessive' and accuses her of seeing other men
- Have become anxious or depressed, quieter and may have lost her confidence
- Have bruises, sprains or cuts on her body
- Say her partner gives her no access to money or that she must justify every cent she spends
- Say her partner wants her to leave her job.

How to approach your friend or family member

Your response is really important and can make a great difference. If your response supports and encourages your friend or family member to talk about the situation, she may feel stronger and start to explore her options.

When approaching your friend or family member to talk about domestic violence it is helpful if:

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- She is alone and it is safe for her to speak
- You approach her in a sensitive way.
For example say something like: "I am worried about you because I've noticed ..." to start the conversation
- You respect your friend or family member's decision if she does not want to talk about the domestic violence.
She may not be ready to talk, she may be fearful of talking or she may feel ashamed. It may take some time for her to feel comfortable and safe to talk about domestic violence.

When your friend or family member is ready to talk

When your friend or family member is ready to talk, it is important to listen to her and take the issue seriously.

Believe what she tells you.

You may be thinking: "Her partner seems like a really great person". However, many people who use abusive behaviour can appear caring and charming but this does not indicate the kind of person they are behind closed doors. Many are only abusive to their partners.

Focus on how she is feeling and how she is coping with the domestic violence.

For example, ask your friend or family member: "How have you been managing? How is his behaviour affecting you?"

Let her know domestic violence is not her fault.

Tell her that she does not deserve to be abused. Say things like: "The way he is treating you is wrong, it's abuse" or "He may feel angry but he has a choice in how he responds in this situation. He can walk away and go into another room." Anger is not an excuse for domestic violence.

Focus on her safety and her children's safety.

Let her know you are worried about her and her children's safety. Say things like: "I am really afraid for your safety."

Let her know you are there for her (if this does not put your safety at risk).

Ask her: "What can I do to help you?"

Let her know about the Domestic Violence Line.

At the Domestic Violence Line counsellors will talk to your friend or family member as well as to you if required 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It can be reached toll free on 1800 65 64 63,
TTY 1800 67 14 42

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(Interpreters are available).

What to avoid when talking to your friend or family member

When talking to your friend or family member there are some things to avoid as they may lead to her feeling judged or criticised. She could become too afraid or ashamed to talk about the domestic violence.

Avoid blaming your friend or family member for the domestic violence.

It is likely your friend may be blaming herself for the domestic violence and may even say to you: "It's my fault". It is important not to agree with her as no one deserves to be abused no matter what. It is a crime.

Suggesting she must have done something wrong to provoke the abuse is not supportive. For example do not ask: "What did you do to make him treat you like that?" Her partner chooses to perpetrate violence against her to maintain power and control in the relationship.

Avoid blaming alcohol, other drugs or mental health issues for his domestic violence behaviour.

Alcohol, other drugs and mental health issues do not cause domestic violence, his need for power and control does. Many people use alcohol and other drugs and are never abusive to their partners.

Avoid telling her what to do.

When you care about someone and want them to be safe, it is understandable you may want to tell them what to do. But your friend or family member may have lost some of her self-esteem, confidence and decision-making skills due to her partner's controlling and abusive behaviour.

To support her in making a decision, she needs to be able to explore options and make her own choices. This will help her to gain back her self-confidence. Giving information about domestic violence rather than telling her what to do can support her to make her own choices and decisions.

Avoid talking to the abuser about his behaviour.

Confronting the partner about his abusive behaviour may place you and your friend or family member in danger.

Avoid making negative comments about her partner.

It is understandable that if your friend or family member's partner's behaviour is abusive you may feel anger, disgust and hatred towards him. However, if you share any negative comments about the partner with your friend or family member it may lead to her feeling she needs to protect him and stand up for him. It is not supportive to talk about him. It is supportive to focus on her feelings and safety.

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For help and further information ring the NSW Department of Community Services' Domestic Violence Line on 1800 65 64 63.

Do not expect that your friend or family member will leave the relationship.

It can be very disturbing to know someone you care about is experiencing domestic violence. So it is only natural to think: "I want her to leave him", "Why doesn't she just leave?" and "How can she still say she loves him?" But ending any relationship is difficult. Ending a domestic violence relationship can be extremely difficult.

There are many reasons why it may be hard for her to leave:

- She may have been threatened by her partner. He may have told her he will harm her, himself, her family or the children if she leaves him.
- She may hope her partner will change and go back to how he behaved at the beginning of the relationship.
- She may think the abuse is her fault and if she changes the domestic violence will stop.
- She may be committed to the relationship or the belief that marriage is forever.
- She may be committed to the belief that the children need to live with both parents.
- She may be experiencing pressure from her family or community to stay with her partner.
- She may be worried about where she will live and how she will manage financially.
- She may be afraid of coping by herself.

SOME USEFUL CONTACTS

For help, ring the Domestic Violence Line toll free on **1800 65 64 63**
TTY 1800 67 14 42

State-wide Service 24 hours a day 7 days a week
Interpreters available

For Sexual Assault

Contact the NSW Rape Crisis Centre for 24hr counselling or to find out your nearest sexual assault service

Phone: (02) 9819 7357 (Sydney metropolitan)

Toll free: 1800 424 017 (24 hours, 7 days)

Website: www.nswrapecrisis.com.au

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Women violence & the law

For more information about violence against women visit

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vaw or phone 02 9716 2061

Source: NSW Department of Community Service – Domestic Violence Booklets