Domestic and family violence takes many forms. It involves violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instil fear. It doesn’t have to be physical abuse. It can be emotional, psychological, financial, sexual or other types of abuse.

It can affect anyone in the community, regardless of gender, sexual identity, race, age, culture, ethnicity, religion, disability, economic status or location.
Get help now...

It’s never too late to seek help if you, or someone you know, is a victim of domestic violence.

If you are in immediate danger call the Police on 000
Domestic Violence Line (24 hrs) 1800 656 463
www.community.nsw.gov.au
Translating and interpreting service 13 14 50

What is domestic and family violence?

Domestic violence takes many forms.
It involves violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer, friend or family member, boyfriend or girlfriend, to control, dominate, humiliate or instil fear. A person does not need to be married for it to be considered ‘domestic and family violence’. A person does not need to experience all of these types of abuse for it to be considered domestic or family violence.

Domestic and family violence can include (but is not limited to) the following types of abuse:

Psychological

» driving dangerously
» destruction of property
» abuse of pets in front of family members
» making threats regarding custody of any children
» asserting that the police and justice system will not assist, support or believe the victim
» threatening to ‘out’ the person.

Emotional

» blaming the victim for all problems in the relationship
» constantly comparing the victim with others to undermine self-esteem and self-worth
» sporadic sulking

» withdrawing all interest and engagement (for example weeks of silence)
» emotional blackmail and suicidal threats.

Social

» systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends to alienate them
» instigating and controlling the move to a location where the victim has no established social circle or employment opportunities
» restricting use of the car or telephone
» forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people.

Financial

» forbidding access to bank accounts
» providing only an inadequate ‘allowance’
» not allowing the victim to seek or hold employment
» coercing to sign documents or make false declarations
» using all wages earned by the victim for household expenses
» controlling the victim’s pension
» denying that the victim has an entitlement to joint property.

Physical

» direct assault on the body
  (strangulation or choking, shaking, eye injuries, biting, slapping, pushing, spitting, punching, or kicking)
» use of weapons including objects
» assault of children
» locking the victim in or out of the house
» forcing the victim to take drugs, withholding medication, food or medical care
» sleep deprivation

by taking steps together we can make the violence stop
www.facebook.com/whiteribbonrun
Verbal
» swearing and continual humiliation, either in private or in public
» attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image and capacity as a parent and spouse.

Sexual
» any form of pressured/unwanted sex or sexual degradation by an intimate partner or ex-partner, such as sexual activity without consent
» causing pain during sex
» assaulting genitals
» coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease
» making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly (including taking or distributing explicit photos without their consent)
» criticising or using sexually degrading insults.

Harassment and stalking
» following and watching
» telephone and online harassment
» tracking with Global Positioning Systems (GPS)
» being intimidating.

Signs you could be in an abusive relationship

Our relationships and families should provide us with the things we all need, including love, care and support within a safe environment. Sometimes, however, this is not always the case.

If you are unsure whether the circumstance(s) you find yourself in are within the realm of domestic and family violence, please read the list following:

Does your partner, your boyfriend or girlfriend, your flatmate, your carer, or a family member:
» Make you feel uncomfortable or afraid?
» Often put you down, humiliate you, or make you feel worthless?
» Constantly check up on what you are doing or where you are going?
» Try to stop you from seeing your own friends or family?
» Make you feel afraid to disagree or say 'no' to them?
» Constantly accuse you of flirting with others when this isn't true?
» Tell you how the household finances should be spent, or stop you having any money for yourself?
» Stop you from having medical assistance?
» Scare or hurt you by being violent (e.g. hitting, choking, smashing things, locking you in, driving dangerously to frighten you)?
» Pressure or force you to do sexual things that you don't want to do?
» Threaten to hurt you, or to kill themselves if you say you want to end the relationship?
» Interfere with your online access or access to the phone?
» Hurt your children, or performed violent actions in front of your children?
» Make regular negative comments about the way you look or what you wear?

If you have answered ‘yes’ to any of these, then there are signs that you are not being treated right, or that you are being abused. If you don’t feel safe, respected and cared for, then something isn’t right. If you want to talk to someone about these things, counsellors are available on the Domestic Violence Line on 1800 656 463.

Checklist produced by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (republished with permission)
I have nowhere to go

Fear of having nowhere to go can make it hard to leave a violent relationship. There are emergency short-term and long-term accommodation options available for women who experience domestic and family violence in NSW. For access to your local women’s refuge or emergency accommodation, call the Domestic Violence Line on 1800 656 463. Some refuges prefer not to advertise their phone numbers, but the Domestic Violence Line will take your number and the local refuge will phone you back.

For emergency accommodation because of homelessness, call the Homeless Persons Information Centre on Toll free 1800 234 566. Note, however, that this number does not provide domestic and family violence support services.

Deciding whether to leave or stay

As you decide whether to leave your partner or stay with them, you might be thinking:

» my partner has promised to stop the abuse. Often abusive partners plead for another chance, beg for forgiveness, and promise to change. They may even mean what they say in that moment, but their true intention is to keep you from leaving. Most of the time, they quickly return to their abusive and controlling behaviour once they have been forgiven and they are no longer worried that you will leave.

» I am hoping my partner will change. While change is not impossible, it is not quick or easy. Change can only happen once your partner takes full responsibility for their behaviour and stops blaming you, or their unhappy childhood, stress, work, financial problems, drinking, drug misuse, depression or temper.

» I can help my partner. It is not unusual to want to help your partner. You may think you are the only one who understands them or that it is your responsibility to fix their problems. But, the reality is that by staying and accepting repeated abuse, you are reinforcing and enabling their abusive behaviour.

» my partner is attending counselling. Even if your partner is in counselling, there is no guarantee that they will change. Many partners who go through counselling continue to be violent, abusive, and controlling. If your partner has stopped trivialising the problem or making excuses, that is a good sign. But you still need to make your decision based on who they are now, not the person you hope they will become.

I am worried about how I will survive financially

The Australian Government, through Centrelink, can provide crisis payments in cases of domestic violence. For enquiries about financial assistance call Centrelink on 13 10 21.

For enquiries about services and payments call the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50 or visit the Department of Human Services Centrelink website www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/dhs/centrelink

I am worried about someone else

You may have a sister, colleague, Mum, cousin, neighbour or friend who is experiencing violence. Your friend or family member may:

» seem afraid of their partner or is always anxious to please their partner
» stop seeing friends and family
» have become anxious, depressed, withdrawn or have lost their confidence
» say their partner is jealous, possessive or has a bad temper
» have bruises, sprains or cuts on their body
Young women can experience a variety of forms of violence and controlling behaviour. Sometimes this can be difficult to recognise as domestic violence and you might be confused about how you’re feeling – your partner (your boyfriend or girlfriend) might be loving one day and violent the next. Here are some signs that something is not quite right in your relationship:

» you have lost your confidence because of things your partner says to you
» your partner hits you or throws things at you when he gets angry
» your partner gets jealous all the time and accuses you of cheating
» your partner tries to stop you from hanging out with your friends and family
» your partner makes you feel scared.

There are services available for young people who experience domestic violence, even if you just want to call and talk it through with someone. Remember that you are not alone and that every relationship should be respectful.

The Line: Helping teenagers and young adults through a difficult time in their lives. Call 1800 MYLINE (1800 695 463) or visit http://theline.org.au

Love: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly: Information and advice from the personal experiences of other young people who have been there. Visit http://lovegoodbadugly.com

Your response is very important and can make a real difference. If someone feels supported by the people around them, they are more likely to explore their options.

If you are approaching your friend or family member to talk about domestic violence, wait until they are alone and it is safe to speak. Say something like ‘I’ve noticed you seem really unhappy lately and I’m worried about you. Are you ok?’ Don’t push them into talking if they are uncomfortable, but let them know that you’re there if they need to talk.

Important things to remember are:

» let them know you believe them by telling them outright or saying things like ‘I’m so sorry’ or ‘I’m glad that you told me’
» let them know that it is not their fault by telling them outright or saying things like ‘No one deserves to be treated like this’ or ‘It’s a crime’
» let them know you are there for them by saying things like ‘I’ll do what I can to help you’ and that there are services available that can help. Tell them about the Domestic Violence Line, available on 1800 656 463
» look after yourself. Supporting a friend or relative who is being abused can be frustrating, frightening and stressful. You may wish to speak to someone about it. Lifeline is a 24 hour support service and can be contacted on 13 11 14.

Youth Emergency Accommodation Line
P: 02 9318 1531 ext 2
Free call: 1800 424 830 (outside Sydney)

National Children’s & Youth Law Centre
Hotline: 02 9385 9588
www.ncylc.org.au

Youth Action and Policy Association Inc (YAPA)
The peak community group working in the interests of young people and youth services in NSW
P: 02 9281 5522
Toll free: 1800 627 323 (NSW only)
www.yapa.org.au

Legal Aid Youth Hotline
Legal advice for children and young people under the age of 18.
P: 1800 101 810

Lawstuff
www.lawstuff.org.au

Kids Help Line
Toll free: 1800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au
I am an older woman

Women of all ages can experience domestic and family violence. Recent data indicates that one in four women reporting physical domestic violence are aged 45 years and over.

Some older women may have experienced domestic and family violence for years, while for others the abuse may have started later in life. Some have experienced violence from their partner, whereas others have experienced violence from their children or carers.

It is important to remember that domestic and family violence is not only physical but can include emotional, social, verbal and psychological abuse as well as harassment and stalking. It could include financial abuse, such as controlling your pension.

While older women’s experiences of violence reflect those of other women, there are also particular issues that arise for many older women in violent relationships.

I am a migrant woman

In my culture, husbands are the head of the family and some think it’s ok to use violence against their wife.

NSW is proud to be a multicultural Australian state in which individuals from different cultures are encouraged to identify with their heritage. All women and men in NSW share the same human rights as well as equality before the law.

In NSW there are services available as well as support and protection for women who are victims of domestic violence. Translators are available for you if you are not confident speaking English. The NSW Government is committed to building an equitable, inclusive and safe society where all women are valued and respected, can contribute meaningfully, and are able to enjoy the rights, freedoms and protections to which everyone in NSW is entitled.

It’s important to know that if you have come to Australia on a temporary or spousal visa, you can apply for residency if you have suffered domestic and family violence. Under the immigration law, refuge workers are permitted to help you fill in immigration forms.

If you are worried that you will be forced to return to your home country contact the Domestic Violence Line on 1800 656 463. You might also find it useful to contact:

Older Women’s Network
P: 02 9247 7046 www.ownnsw.org.au

Older Person’s Legal Service

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Older Person’s Legal Service
Aurora – new domestic and family violence app

If you are experiencing domestic and family violence or you’re worried that a friend or family member is, this app contains useful and potentially life-saving information. You’ll find:

» emergency contacts
» information on the sorts of behaviour considered to be domestic and family violence
» vital information and links to support services available in NSW.

The app also allows the user to message their trusted friends and family members or call emergency services immediately.

Download free from the iPhone App Store and the Android Google Play Store.

Staying Home Leaving Violence

Staying Home Leaving Violence is a free NSW service that provides the support you need, for as long as you need, to exclude violence from your home and prevent it in the future. It is a long-term support program designed to assist you through each step of the process. As part of this program, the violent person is removed from the home allowing you and your children, if you have them, to remain safely in your home.

Staying Home Leaving Violence caseworkers help you:

» work with Police and the courts to remove your violent husband, partner or boyfriend
» support you through the separation
» help with housing and money matters
» improve your family’s safety.

You will be provided with a range of support services such as safety planning, improving your home’s security such as changing the locks and putting up stronger window screens, assistance in managing finances, support for children and help throughout the legal process.

If you decide to stay in your home, there are services that can help support you at this time. Support workers from women’s refuges can help you work out what extra services you need, and link you up with them.

Staying Home Leaving Violence operates in 18 communities across NSW. Call the Staying Home Leaving Violence program in your area:

Bega: 02 6492 6239
Campbelltown: 02 4633 3777
Dubbo: 02 6883 1560
Eastern Sydney: 0439 414 673
Fairfield: 02 9602 7795
Kempsey: 02 6563 1588
Lake Macquarie: 02 4943 9255
Liverpool: 02 9602 7795
Maitland: 02 4933 9540
Moree: 02 6752 8027
Mount Druitt: 02 9677 1962
Newcastle: 02 4926 3577
Penrith: 02 4721 2499
Redfern: 02 9699 9036
Shoalhaven: 0459 046 066 or 0459 046 077
Walgett: 02 6828 1611
Wollongong: 02 4255 5333
Wyong: 02 4350 1748

Taking steps to heal

The effects of domestic and family violence can continue for a long time even after the end of the relationship. Attending counselling, therapy, or a support group can help you understand what you have been through and assist you to build new and healthy relationships.

After the trauma you have been through, you may be struggling with upsetting emotions, frightening memories, or a sense of constant danger. Or you may feel numb, disconnected, and unable to trust other people. When bad things happen, it can take a while to get over the pain and feel safe again. Remember that you are not alone. Support from family, friends and counsellors can help your recovery.

If you ever feel that you need to talk to someone, please contact the Domestic Violence on 1800 656 463 or one of the services listed.
I am a man experiencing domestic and family violence

Although domestic and family violence is more commonly experienced by women it can happen to men, too. Violence against any person is unacceptable. Perpetrators of violence against men include their children, wives or partners, parents, siblings and carers.

Men who experience domestic and family violence are more likely to experience psychosomatic symptoms, stress, depression and alcoholism, than non-abused men.

Many men who experience domestic and family violence feel a sense of shame about the abuse they are experiencing. This may be related to feeling like they should be able to protect themselves from violence. It is important to remember that it is never your fault and that men, like everyone else, are entitled to the full protection of the law when it comes to domestic violence.

If you are male and experiencing domestic violence, support and services are available.

MensLine Australia
P: 1300 789 978 (24/7)
www.menslineaus.org.au

National Domestic Violence Line
P: 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)

I am a young male and I am concerned about my behaviour in my relationship

Recognising that you have problems controlling your anger or dealing with difficult phases in your relationship is a great first step. If you require more information, or need to talk to someone confidentially try contacting one of the following services.

Mensline is a national helpline that offers support, information and referrals to help men to deal with relationship problems in a practical and effective way. P: 02 9708 2088 or 1300 789 978 or email: talkitover@menslineaus.org.au.

Kids Helpline 24/7: If you’re under 25 can call 1800 551 800 (24/7) or use their web or email counselling services, if you want to talk about relationships. No problem or concern is too big or too small to talk to the counsellors about. www.kidshelp.com.au

Reach Out is a website for young people to help them understand issues relating to mental health and wellbeing. It includes information about issues relating to violence. http://au.reachout.com

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