

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE?

Domestic and family violence occurs when one person in a relationship uses violence or abuse to maintain power and control over the other person.

People who experience these acts of abuse or violence often feel fearful and unsafe.

Domestic and family violence occurs in many relationships within Australian society and worldwide and is not restricted to any particular socioeconomic, racial or cultural groups.

Domestic and family violence occurs between people in a range of domestic relationships including wife/husband/girlfriend/boyfriend relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships.

In relationships where domestic and family violence occurs, the abusive behaviours can include some or all of the following:

- physical abuse (including slapping, hitting, punching, pushing, biting, kicking).
- threatening to hurt you, your relatives, friends or work colleagues in some way.
- damaging property (including punching holes in walls, breaking furniture, harming pets or animals in order to frighten and intimidate you).
- emotional abuse (including making you feel worthless, criticising your personality, your looks, the way you dress, constantly putting you down, threatening to hurt you, your children or your pets or threatening to damage personal items you value).
- verbal abuse (including yelling, shouting, name-calling, and swearing at you).
- sexual abuse (including forcing or pressuring you to have sex or participate in any sexual acts).
- financial abuse (including taking control of the money, not giving you enough money to survive on, forcing you to hand over your money, not letting you have a say in how it is spent).
- threatening to stop providing care for you if you don't do what you are told, for example, if you don't hand over your Centre-link payment or income. This sometimes happens to people with an illness, disability or impairment who rely on another person to care for them.
- social abuse (including controlling where you go, not letting you see or have contact with your friends or family).
- depriving you of the necessities of life such as food, shelter, medical care and the company of other people such as your family and friends.
- spiritual abuse (including forcing you to attend religious activities against your wishes, prohibiting you from participating in the religious or cultural practices of your choice).
- stalking (including constantly following you by foot or car, constantly calling you by phone, text message and email, or staying outside your house or workplace).

A PERSON DOES NOT HAVE TO BE PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED TO BE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC OR FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Generally, in a healthy domestic or family relationship, arguments occur over a disagreement or differing points of view on a specific issue.

During the course of a domestic argument, voices can be raised in heated discussions but a level of respect and equality between partners remains.

Domestic and Family Violence occurs when one partner in a relationship uses tactics aimed at achieving control and dominance.

In this situation, the abusive person will seek to 'win' the argument by not allowing the other person to express their view or coercing them, through the use of violence and abuse, to give in to the abusive person's opinion.

The essential difference is the lack of equality and respect between the two people, with one person maintaining control over the other.

People of all ages, races, religions and cultures and from all types of backgrounds can use violent and abusive behaviours towards the people they are in domestic relationships with.

Domestic and family violence is not confined to any particular social or ethnic group.

While there may be a whole range of things that you and the other person disagree about, it is important that these differences are resolved in a way that does not involve violence and abuse. It is important that your behaviour does not cause the other person to feel fearful and unsafe.