



WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

*Dealing with abusive
and violent behaviours
in relationships and the
family*

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| ENGLISH | If you need interpreting help, telephone: |
| ARABIC | إذا احتجت لمساعدة في الترجمة الشفوية، إتصل برقم الهاتف: |
| CHINESE | 如果你需要传译员的帮助，请打电话: |
| CROATIAN | Ako trebate pomoć tumača telefonirajte: |
| GREEK | Αν χρειάζεστε διερμηνέα τηλεφωνήστε στο |
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SPECIAL NOTE The information provided in this booklet is given in general terms. It is important to get more detailed information and advice from the contact agencies listed at Section 17.

acknowledgments

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Is this about me?

Our families and relationships provide us with things we all need like love, being cared for, support and safety. Sometimes this isn't always the case....

- Is the behaviour of someone close to you making you feel worried, uncomfortable, afraid and unhappy at home?
- Are you being hurt or hit by someone you love and trust?
- Are you frightened of your partner, your parent, your boyfriend or girlfriend or perhaps your sibling?
- Does your partner or someone else in your family always put you down and humiliate you and tell you "it's all your fault"?
- Are you being coerced or forced to do something against your will?
- Are you kept isolated from friends, family and from having an active and full life?
- Have you been threatened or attacked with a weapon?
- Have your children heard, or seen these things or been hurt themselves?

Abuse within your relationship or family could be anything from physical or sexual assault to having your possessions damaged or destroyed. You might also be deprived of financial support or access to medical assistance.

Sometimes the hardest thing about living with abusive and violent behaviours in relationships is actually recognising that it is happening to you. Perhaps you can't believe that someone you love and trust can hurt or hit or humiliate you.

If you are living with abusive and violent behaviours then this booklet is for you. Most of the discussion contained in this booklet is more about abusive and violent behaviours in adult relationships. But the information can also be useful to younger or older people. You may be a woman or a man, or you may be in a lesbian or gay relationship. Or you may be a young person or a child experiencing abusive and/or violent behaviour from a brother or sister, or your parents or someone else in your extended family. You could also be an older person who is being mistreated by a member of your family. You do not even need to live with the person to be affected by their abusive or violent behaviour.

ABUSIVE BEHAVIOURS CAN AFFECT ANYONE. Women and children are the people who most often experience abusive and violent behaviours in the home from their male partners, or fathers and step-fathers. But family violence cuts across all sections of the community. It doesn't matter what your ethnic or religious background is, whether you are indigenous, or if you have a high income or are on benefits. It doesn't matter if you have a disability or are young or old. And it doesn't matter if you are gay or straight.

When people do speak about the abusive and violent behaviour they are experiencing, it is often the emotional harm that they say is the most long-lasting. You may feel as though you are the only person who is living with abusive and violent behaviour in the way that you are.

Everyone's experience of abuse is unique but it is often a combination of emotional, physical and sexual abuse with other controlling behaviours such as isolation and financial deprivation.

The abusive and violent behaviour can be quite isolated incidents or it can be regular and repeated. Abuse can happen after years of living together or marriage, or during the beginning of a relationship. It could be part of your daily life in your family. You are not alone in your experience.

Recognising that you don't like what is happening to you, that it is in fact abusive, can be the first step on a long road. But it is a journey that can give you back your self-respect, your health, a sense that you are a worthwhile person, your safety and your dreams for the future.

What now?

The first step is to see the abusive and violent behaviours for what they are - behaviour that hurts you. It isn't an expression of love or caring.

The person who uses abusive and violent behaviour does so to get their own way and to control you. These are behaviours that are often only used against you and possibly your children - not at work, not at the sporting club and often not in public. If you feel that you are experiencing abusive and violent behaviour within your family or relationship, it is important that you realise that you are not responsible. **It is not your fault.** You have the right to live without fear and abuse.

The next step is to begin to seek the help, information and support which will enable you and any dependents to achieve this goal of living safe, well and free of abusive and violent behaviour.

But what about love?

The feelings we have for our partners and families are powerful. Love, passion, trust, responsibility and attachment can bind us as much as fear. Other commitments such as children or shared possessions and history are strong forces in our lives. You may want the relationship to continue but the abusive and violent behaviours to stop.

When thinking about what you can do it is important to know that **people who use abusive and violent behaviours are responsible for their own behaviour.** Many people think that abusers somehow can't control what they do. But each of us can control ourselves. Some people who use abusive and violent behaviours do change and stop their violence. Many do not. Often it is left to the people who live with the abuse to try and improve their safety and that of their children. You know your abuser

and your own safety needs best, so remember that what works for someone else may not work for you. There are a range of options open to you.

SOME QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

Some of the following questions may help you think about the quality of your relationship. Writing or thinking about some answers for yourself may help you decide what to do.

- Do you feel this is the way you want your relationship to be in the future? If not, what would need to change?
- What are the positive things you don't want to lose?
- Are there negative things you put up with to keep the relationship going or keep the family together? What are they?
- Do you feel proud of the person and the way they are in your relationship or family? Or do you wish the person behaved differently towards you? How?
- Who do you think puts in the effort to control the abuse and violence in your relationship or family? You or the person using these behaviours? If it is you, what would happen if you expected them to be responsible for controlling their own behaviour?
- Does the person using abusive and violent behaviour say sorry but not stop?
- Has the abusive and violent behaviour got better or worse over time?
- Do things happen in front of your children that you'd rather they didn't have to see or live with?
- What would happen if you no longer forgave or put up with the violent and abusive behaviours? Stopped looking after their moods? Stopped keeping your thoughts and feelings to yourself? Stopped feeling their behaviour is somehow your fault? Stopped feeling intimidated by their behaviours?

What exactly can I do?

No-one likes, asks for or wants to live with abusive and violent behaviour. If you are unsure what to do then some of the following ideas might help.¹ For some people these have worked in getting the person abusing them to stop using abusive and violent behaviour but not for other people. You have to look at your own situation and decide what may or may not be helpful. The length of time you have been experiencing the abuse and the level of violence being used against you may also influence what you chose to do. Many people use a combination of all sorts of things before finding something that works and is safe for them.

- Think about who you could trust to talk safely with. This could be a friend, your sister or brother, a community elder, or a teacher for example. Just talking it through with someone else can give you a bit of distance to see the situation more clearly. This person can help you see it isn't your fault and that you are not alone. They could help you explore the following different ideas.
- Calling a telephone service such as the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS - 6280 0900) which is available 24 hours a day for all people affected by abusive and violent behaviours in relationships and the family to talk over what is happening and what you could do. You don't have to give them your name or any personal details.
- Counselling may be an option for abusers who want to change and stop their abusive and violent behaviour. This can be a long process.
- Finding ways to be less controlled and isolated, for example, by seeing your friends, taking up a course, or getting a job.
- Getting a family or community member to talk with the abuser. Whoever this person is has to be clear that using abusive and violent behaviour is never okay.

¹ More detailed information is given about some of these options at pages 14–21.

- Joining a support group or finding a counsellor for yourself. This can help break down your sense of isolation and help you think through what is best for you and your kids.
- Calling the police. They are required to respond promptly to your call.
- Getting a personal protection order. This is an order of the court directing a person to do or not do certain things.
- Asking for assistance from an outside help agency be it a community or government one. A contact list is given at the back of this booklet.
- Actually leaving or getting the abuser to leave the relationship or family home. There are places that can help you leave and live independently. Also, you can get legal advice about the possibility of excluding the abuser from your home. Leaving or threatening to leave can be a dangerous time. If you think that threatening to leave will mean increased threats, violence and watching over you, then consider it carefully. Do work out a **safety or crisis plan** (see p.11).

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER

Before deciding what to do it is important to think about some possible consequences. Many people underestimate the response they get from the abuser to their actions. The person using abusive and violent behaviour may increase their watching and control over you and your children by taking the car keys or cutting off the phone for example. The severity of physical violence may increase, or threats may be made to harm or take the children, and to harm your family and friends.

Finally, if you do react to the physical violence, for example by defending yourself or fighting back, there is a risk that this will put you in more danger of injury. Such actions may make it possible for the abuser to seek a protection order against you, or for police to arrest you. Others may wrongly call this “mutual violence” and say you are equally responsible. However, you have the right to use reasonable force to defend yourself.

Making a safety or crisis plan

You may never have to use it but it can be helpful if you have a **safety or crisis plan** prepared. In the event that you have to leave home in a hurry you will not have to use valuable time trying to remember everything. The DVCS can talk you through a plan that’s right for you. The following is a suggested crisis plan.

1. Think about where you would go or who you would turn to if an emergency happened.
2. Find somewhere you can quickly and easily use a phone.
3. Always carry with you a list of the numbers you can call in an emergency. Call 000 for police attendance.
4. Try and save some money so you can get a taxi, or pay bus fares if necessary.
5. Have an extra set of keys for the house or car.
6. If you have children, and it feels safe to do so, talk to them. They are probably aware of the abuse anyway. Teach them how to use a phone and what to say.
7. Keep or make copies of important financial or legal papers, and gather some small sentimental things, favourite toys, any medication, and basic belongings. Things that you and your children may need and want to keep safe.
8. Keep the papers, keys, your crisis fund of money, and a set of clothes for yourself and for any children, packed in a bag and left in a safe place that you can quickly get and take with you. Alternatively, leave it with a friend.
9. Let a trusted friend or neighbour know about your crisis plan and how or if they can help.

Advice for family, friends and neighbours

The majority of people affected by abusive and violent behaviour turn first to family and friends for support. What you say and do therefore can be vitally important. Just reading this booklet may give you some ideas about how to help. Here are some tips to remember:

- If someone tells you that they are being hurt by abusive and violent behaviour believe what they say. It is really hard telling people, even close friends and family, about your private pain.
- Ask the person how you can help. They may want reassurance from you that what is happening is 'real', that they aren't crazy, that it is unacceptable, and they may simply want a sympathetic ear.
- Gently check out how safe the person is feeling at the time. Perhaps you could explore with them some of the ideas discussed before in this booklet. When you do this, be careful also to explore the possible consequences of taking one course of action or another.
- Even though you may be shocked or angry, try to avoid saying nasty things about the person using abusive and violent behaviour. It is not uncommon for the victim to be loyal and protective of that person. Many still feel love towards the person and have a sense of commitment to the relationship. Perhaps you can understand this better if you reflect upon the emotional and other entanglements that are a part of relationships and families.
- In thinking about the sort of help you may be able to give, it is important to know that your support may be required over a long period of time. Supporting someone you care for who is living with abusive and violent behaviours can be frustrating. It is important to 'stick with' the person but, at the same time, to be clear about your own limits.
- If you are asked to 'have a word with' the person using abusive and violent behaviour, think about this carefully. In particular, talk with the victim about the possible angry reaction they (or even you) may get for revealing the abuse to an 'outsider'. Work out a safety plan with the

victim and for yourself before you make the approach. Be aware that the person using the abusive and violent behaviour may want to "tell their side". You may not want to 'take sides' but it is really important to keep clear in your own mind and in your conversations with the abuser that abusive and violent behaviour is unacceptable and there is no excuse for it.

- As a family member, friend or neighbour you too need support and information. The DVCS receives 600 calls a year from people such as you who want to help.

The next steps

Having recognised the abuse, you may feel scared or unsure of what to do next. Sometimes it can feel easier to 'stay put'. But abuse can, and often does, get worse.

Finding someone to discuss your options with can be a very useful step. DVCS and Mensline² are there for all people affected by abusive and violent behaviours in a relationship or their family. They will listen to your story, offer support and suggest a range of options for your individual needs.

It may be useful to get specific information for the person experiencing the abusive and violent behaviour and for the person using these behaviours, such as:

- counselling and support options;
- protection and legal options;
- alternative housing;
- health issues;
- concerns for children and other dependents, and
- financial entitlements.

² There are other contact and help agencies listed at p.26.

Someone to talk with

Finding the courage and energy to find and go to a counsellor or support group can be an effort. But many, many people who have experienced abusive and violent behaviours often say that it was getting a supportive response from someone outside the family that was helpful in deciding what to do. You can even speak with someone over the phone without giving your name.

Counselling may help you become more aware of your own feelings and needs. Good counselling can help you identify your strengths and find ways of developing new skills and resources. Good counselling should help you prepare for taking charge of your life. Good counselling will not hold you responsible for someone else's violence, or for stopping it.

Support groups can also be very helpful in expanding your networks and in providing other options. Listening to the stories of others shows you that you are not alone or crazy.

Free counselling is available. Contacts for counsellors and support groups are at pages 26-37.

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Health Issues

Many people experiencing abuse go to doctors, hospitals and health centres as an early and critical source of assistance and information. This may be for the treatment of injuries, or for some health problems that result from abuse. They may simply appear to be a good person to talk with.

Your health is vital so always seek treatment for injuries. Living with abusive and violent behaviours can generate a range of injuries and health problems such as chronic pain, depression, anxiety, stress-related

ailments and miscarriage. Some people may also use cigarettes, alcohol or drugs to excess to help cope with the negative situation they are living in. It is important to tell your doctor the truth about what is happening to you so that he or she can perhaps offer some assistance or advice rather than just prescribing tranquillisers like Valium or Serapax, and not dealing with the real issue, the violence, that is making you feel sick.

You may also want to talk with your doctor about making a full record of your injuries and health problems, and a record about what you say has caused them. This information is confidential between the doctor and yourself and is important for an accurate diagnosis. It may also be useful for Court or compensation proceedings should you choose these paths.

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Exploring legal choices

You may have a number of legal options³. First, it is important to keep in mind that domestic violence is a crime. Second, if you are unsure about involving the police then you can apply for a personal protection order. Third, there are a number of agencies which exist to protect the interests of vulnerable people especially the young, the elderly and those with a mental or physical incapacity. Fourth, you may need to think about making an application to the Family Court. And finally you may be eligible for criminal injuries financial assistance and could also seek legal advice about making a civil claim for damages.

Seeking Police Protection

The police are the most likely agency called in a crisis by people being abused. They are required to respond promptly and should talk with you separately from the person who has hurt you. Police are required to notify the Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) of the incident. You can then agree to having the DVCS support worker come in and give you additional support.

³ More information on the legal system is given in the booklet *Victims of Crime* which is available from agencies at p.24.

If police consider there is evidence that a criminal offence has been committed - for example, you have physical injuries, or property has been damaged - they may arrest and charge the abuser. Police or the DVCS can also advise you about personal protection. The police Victim Liaison Officers can also help with general enquiries, information and referral (6256 7777).

If you have problems with how the police, prosecution or the courts have dealt with your situation you could contact the Ombudsman or the Victims of Crime Coordinator (see p.41 for details).

Criminal Proceedings

Many victims are relieved to have the abuser dealt with by the police and courts. There are lots of support people who can help you through this process. Other victims are worried about the prospect of criminal charges being brought against their abuser. You may have questions such as: What will happen? How will they react? Will I have to give evidence, if so will they be there? The police Victim Liaison Officers or Prosecution Witness Assistant can answer some of these questions. In the end it is up to the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether a matter will be prosecuted. The agencies listed at p26 can help you with information, show you around a court room, and can arrange for support at court.

The ACT has established a Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) and now has a designated Family Violence Court with a dedicated Magistrate and prosecutor. Cases get to court faster and with better evidence and stronger support for victims. In addition, a program called "*Learning to Relate Without Violence and Abuse*" is run jointly by ACT Corrections and Relationships Australia for men convicted of using violence in their relationships with their female partners. Men can also access this program voluntarily.

As a victim of crime, you are entitled to receive certain information about the case and to seek protection as part of bail conditions. If the offender is convicted of an offence against you, you may submit a Victim Impact Statement to the court, advise Probation and Parole of any concerns about your safety and apply to the Victims Register should the offender receive a custodial sentence. The Victims of Crime Coordinator

(6257 8452) can assist you to access your rights.

Personal Protection Orders

You can apply for a protection order yourself by completing an application at the Magistrates Court, or by using the Legal Aid duty solicitor scheme at the Court (there may be a small fee for this though it can be waived), or by using your own solicitor. For details about other free legal services which can give you advice and assistance about your situation, see p.38.

A protection order is an order made by a Magistrate which may order your abuser (*'the respondent'*) to stay away from you, not contact or approach, cause or threaten to cause personal injury, harass, intimidate or behave in an offensive manner towards you, (*the 'applicant'*). You can also ask for the order to exclude the abuser from the home or your workplace and for property to be returned to you. The terms of the order should relate to your particular need for protection. In certain circumstances, the police or a third party (such as the Community Advocate) may make an application for an order on your behalf. The Court must be satisfied that the respondent has harmed or threatened you, physically or emotionally.

If the situation is urgent, an interim, or *'temporary order'*, may be made by a Magistrate on the same day that an application is lodged. For interim protection orders and for application-only cases, the Court Registrar holds a 'conference' or a meeting with the parties before a final protection order may be granted. You do not need to come into contact with your abuser. If agreement at the conference is not reached, the matter is adjourned to a Magistrate for a final hearing at a later date. If you need your interim order extended to the hearing date and the respondent does not consent to the extension, you will need to go to Court on that day for the Magistrate to decide whether the order should be extended. If you have concerns about this, advise the Court Registrar. If you have Family Court Orders that allow your ex-partner to see the children, you or your solicitor should tell the Magistrate when you apply for the protection order. An order can last up to 2 years.

If an incident occurs outside the sitting hours of the Court, you should contact police. In some circumstances, a police officer can make an application for an emergency protection order on your behalf.

Having a Protection Order against them does not necessarily mean the abuser will have a criminal record. However, if the respondent disobeys (or ‘breaches’) any of the conditions of the protection order, they can be arrested and charged by the police. If the breach is then proven beyond reasonable doubt in court, the offender will be convicted and sentenced. The applicant is also responsible for obeying the terms of the order. If they don’t - for example, by telephoning the respondent to make arrangements about children when the order states that there is to be no contact between the applicant and the respondent - then it is possible that they (the applicant) may be charged with ‘aiding and abetting’ a breach.

Protection Orders for Children & Young People

If you are considering including the children on your application for a protection order, or if you are a young person wondering whether you are eligible to apply for one yourself it is best to obtain legal advice first. Call the Legal Aid duty solicitor at the Magistrates Court (6217 4299).

Family Law Proceedings & Other Legal Options

You may decide that separation and divorce is the best option for you. It is then important to seek legal advice and assistance to explore your options, to discuss issues to do with any children and property settlement, and to learn what this process may entail. For contacts on legal services go to p.38.

The Magistrate has the power to vary or suspend Family Court contact orders if it is necessary for your protection or for the protection of your children. If you already have a protection order and you or your ex-partner apply for a Family Court parenting order, you must tell the Family Court about your protection order.

If you have had to flee the home without your children or there are disagreements over children it is very important to seek legal advice as soon as possible (see p.38.).

Help for Vulnerable People

If you are under 18 years old or are infirm or you have a mental or physical disability, there are agencies which can offer help and support and which could take action on your behalf. For example, you could contact (see pp.28–34 for details):

- the Community Advocate
- the Department of Family & Community Services
- the Police Sexual Assault & Child Abuse Team
- the Mental Health Tribunal
- the Guardianship & Management of Property Tribunal
- ADACAS - ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service

Financial Assistance and Civil Action

If you have suffered a physical or mental injury as a result of some criminal conduct against you, then you may be eligible for criminal injuries financial assistance. Information and application forms are available from the Magistrates Court or other support agencies. Also, if the offender is convicted of an offence against you, you may – through the prosecutor – ask that the Magistrate or Judge consider a compensation order as part of the sentence. You could also seek legal advice about any options open to you for making a civil claim for damages. Contacts for legal advice and assistance are given at p38.

Alternative safe accommodation

Many people experiencing abuse and violence can feel trapped because they think that there is no where else to go - especially if you are caring for children or other dependents. If you want to stay where you are, there may be ways to have the abuser excluded from the home (see p.17). You may then need to think about improving security and possibly asking your neighbours to help if a crisis happens.

If you feel that you need to get away for a short time or find somewhere else permanent to live there are options such as:

- You may be able to stay with friends or family for a while.
- For short term crisis accommodation, there are refuges and hostels for families, and for men, women or young people that you can contact directly or be referred to. (see p.35)
- Women's refuges provide safe accommodation in a clean, cheerful and home-like atmosphere. Some refuge accommodation is shared, some is in single family units. Women's refuges have experienced workers both for yourself and your children and provide emotional and practical assistance.
- There is medium term accommodation for people who are waiting for permanent housing (see p.35)
- You could apply, by yourself or with the assistance of a support agency, for more permanent accommodation through either government or community based housing services (see p.35).
- You could privately rent accommodation and you may be entitled to some rent assistance, depending on your income, to assist with rent payments.
- If you can afford it you could investigate buying your own home.
- Relocation interstate may be an option if your circumstances are extremely dangerous. However, if you have children it is important to obtain legal advice about possible implications under the Family Law Act of removing the children.

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What financial support is there for me?

Whether you would be able to live independently of the abuser is a real concern for many people who've experienced abuse. Money can even be withheld or taken from victims as a form of abuse. So it isn't necessarily the case that you will be financially worse off if you leave the relationship.

If leaving your home means that your means of financial support is removed, you may be eligible for assistance from Centrelink (DSS). You may be eligible for one of the following:

- Crisis payment
- Sole Parent Pension
- NewStart
- JobStart
- AUSTUDY or ABSTUDY
- rental assistance, youth allowance, disability benefit.

The Welfare Rights and Legal Centre can advise you more fully of your entitlements. To be eligible for assistance from Centrelink you will be required to provide some proof of your situation and financial position.

If you have problems with credit and debt issues, CARE Inc. can provide free financial counselling and legal advice. See p.39 for contact details.

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What about the children?

Realising the effect on children of witnessing or experiencing violent and abusive behaviours often plays a large part in decisions about what to do. Children know more than you think they do. It's not okay for them to live with abusive behaviour. They need to know that what is happening isn't their fault, they need to be told the truth, and they need to be able to say what they think and feel.

Children who witness abuse

For children from domestic or family violence, the effects of witnessing violence depend upon many things, from the age of the child when the violence starts (whether a young baby or a teenager), the severity and frequency of violence, the support the child receives from adults, to the

child's personality. Consequently, children can have major problems, a few problems, or be seen as having no problems because they behave extremely well and have high achievement. Children exposed to domestic violence and who experience significant harm as a result may be in need of care and protection.

Talk openly to them about what is happening. Children tend to cope better if they know what is going on. It is quite common to feel that you do not have enough emotional energy left to deal with the effects of the abuse on the children. There are lots of people that both you and your children can contact for help and advice (see p.28).

Children who experience abuse

If a child is being hurt by a parent or other family member or any other person it is important for them to find someone they trust to talk with. This could be another parent or family member or even a teacher. There are agencies that can help directly (see p.28)

If you believe or know that someone is abusing your child directly don't keep it to yourself. The consequences of child abuse can be deep and long lasting. There are agencies and helplines that you could discuss your fears and concerns with and who can suggest a number of approaches to consider.

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But it is really hard for me

Every individual is unique and, although there are many common reactions to and experiences of abuse, you may feel that your own situation makes things more difficult. This could be because you are either young or elderly, because you fear racism from 'the system' as an indigenous person or person from a minority ethnic community, because you worry that your immigration status isn't clear, or because you worry that people won't understand abuse in a gay or lesbian relationship.

Everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances, has the right to live free from abuse, fear and threat. You also have the right to equal treatment before the law.

- If you are a child or young person experiencing abuse in your family you may feel incredibly confused about what to do and worry about '*causing trouble*'. You may feel betrayed, deeply sad and angry. Put your safety first and find an adult you like and trust who will listen to you and talk with you about your situation. There are people who are specially trained to understand your situation and advise you of options available to you (see p.28).
- Elderly people can experience abuse from other family members and from carers. Much abuse of elderly people is neglect and financial exploitation. But many experience physical and sexual abuse too. It is particularly hard to seek help about someone you love and who you rely on who is also hurting you. You may feel that there is no alternative for you and you may worry that you'll be '*put in a home*'. You are a worthwhile person and there are agencies to help and advise you.
- People with physical or mental disabilities can be particularly vulnerable to maltreatment and abuse. You may worry that you'll not be able to survive on your own, and your abuser might tell you that '*it's all your fault*' and '*no-one else will have you*'. Believe in yourself and your own capacity to live your dreams.
- People from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may fear being isolated from their community and may find it difficult to access interpreting services in order to find out the information they need. It isn't right for anyone to hit or hurt you, no matter their background or beliefs. You are entitled to dignity and respect for who you are. There are sympathetic groups that can support you.
- People from indigenous communities may worry that they will bring shame on their family if they tell. They may also feel afraid for the safety of the person who has abused them if this person is arrested or they may feel blamed for '*splitting the community*'. Violence is not right whoever is doing it. There is no need to live in fear. Many

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agencies have Aboriginal workers who understand the difficult situation you face.

- Many lesbians and gay men feel that, if they are being hurt by their partner, they have to '*deal with it themselves*'. You may worry about not being believed or being denigrated by people you seek help from. You may feel concern that your friends will not support you or will say it was '*mutual abuse*'. You don't have to live with abuse. There are agencies that will believe you and help you.
- Whether you are a woman or a man being abused, you are entitled to protection and support. Many agencies offer services to victims of abuse regardless of their gender and there are groups just for women and just for men.
- The Domestic Violence Crisis Service is there for all people affected by abusive and violent behaviours in a relationship or the family. Go to the Contact Section on p.26 for details of help agencies just for you.

What about the person using abuse & violence?

People who use abusive and violent behaviours against their partners, children or other family members come from all walks of life. There is no '*typical abuser*'. The person using abuse and violence may also expect and enforce secrecy. So it is often hard to '*tell*' from outside the relationship or family that someone is using violence. This can make it difficult for friends and other family to really believe what is happening.

People who use abusive and violent behaviours to get what they want often have a few characteristics in common. For example, being very self-centred, possessive and jealous; denying, minimising and ignoring the effects of their behaviour on others; being unwilling to take responsibility for their behaviour; and blaming the victim.

Many people who have used abuse and violence express remorse, guilt and upset after they have hit or hurt their victim. They may cry, say they didn't mean it, are sorry or ask your forgiveness. They may promise it will never happen again. This can be confusing for the victim because it feels like you are being asked to look after your abuser's feelings even when they are trampling on yours!

There are many ideas about what causes or triggers abuse. For example, abusers themselves commonly say they '*lost control*' and '*didn't know what I was doing*'. They sometimes say it was stress or work pressures or alcohol that caused them to hit out. If this was true then why do they hurt just you or the children? Why not the boss or people at the pub? Generally, abusers are in control of their behaviour.

Many victims of abusive behaviour within families and relationships really want the abuser to change. Many want to keep the relationship and want the abuse to stop. They often ask if it possible for the abuser to change. In short, the answer is yes. However, you'd be surprised at how many abusers deny that they have done anything wrong, or don't feel they are responsible for their behaviour. Many say it is the victim's fault. There are a lot of privileges to being '*number one*' and often abusers find the necessary changes too hard to make and hold on to.

However, there are some agencies that do provide group or individual sessions for people wanting to stop using abusive and violent behaviour and to change. If someone you know is abusing another person, it is their responsibility to stop this behaviour. Violence never solves anything. Go to p.38 for contacts.

Yes, there is life after abuse

It takes a lot of courage to face up to the abusive and violent behaviour you are experiencing and to challenge the person hurting you. It isn't necessarily all over once you are free of abuse from that person either.

After the first relief of doing something, you may experience many confusing and conflicting emotions. You may really miss this person and grieve for the good times and dreams you had. You may feel depressed and isolated. You may even begin to play down how bad things actually were.

It is really important to find someone you can talk with about these feelings and who can help with the task of *'getting your life together'*. Find a support group or a counsellor; enrol for further education; pamper yourself and take some exercise; pick up your career or find work or volunteer for some community work.

Reclaim your hopes and dreams for your future.

Community and agency contacts

Within the ACT and surrounding NSW districts there are a number of community and government organisations which can provide information, advice and support to people affected by abuse and violence in relationships and the family. These can be found in the Community Help and Welfare Services of the White Pages Telephone Book. The following list is not exhaustive.

The agencies marked with an * have websites accessed via www.communityact.org/

Crisis and support services in the community

Domestic Violence Crisis Service 6280 0900
PO Box 320, Civic Square 2608. (admin) 6280 6999
 TTY 6228 1852

24 hour crisis intervention & telephone support, information & referrals, contact with safe accommodation agencies, court support, and education and resources. For any person affected by abusive and violent behaviours in a relationship or the family.

Sexual Assault Counselling Service 6247 2525
Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, (6247 8071
PO Box 916, Dickson 2602 admin)
 24 hour telephone counselling and one-to-one support for women and men, girls and boys affected by rape, sexual assault and sexual abuse.

Victim Services Scheme 1800 822 272
GPO Box 825, Canberra City 2601 (24hrs)
 Provides free counselling, support and information to victims of crime.

Victims of Crime Assistance League (VOCAL) 6295 9600 *
PO Box 2, Narrabundah 2604
 A support service for victims of crime, counselling and information.

Lifeline 131 114 (24 hrs)
www.lifeline.org.au

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
www.kidshelp.com.au (24 hrs)

Women and girls

Women's Information & Referral Service 6205 1075/1076
6th Floor, FAI Insurance Bldg, 197 London Cirt, Canberra City
www.act.gov.au/womensinfo
 An information, advice and referral service for women and girls in the ACT Region.

Domestic Violence Support Worker (WIRC) 6205 1075/1076
 Provides one-to-one assistance and a facilitated support group for women affected by domestic violence.

Women's Information Resources and 6248 8600 or
Education on Drugs & Dependency 6247 2399
 Information and advice for women affected by drugs and alcohol.

Women's Health Matters Information Line **6286 2043**
Women's Centre for Health Matters,
Building 1, Pearce Community Centre,
Collett Place, Pearce

Information, referral and other services on women's health matters.

Women's Health Service **6205 1078**
1st floor, ACT Health Building,
cnr. Moore & Alinga St, Canberra City

Medical consultations and counselling for women affected by violence, referrals and Well Women's Clinics. Call between 1.30 and 4pm for an appointment.

Services for children and young people

Child Abuse Prevention Service **FREECALL**
(Child & Parent's Stress Service) **1800 688 009**
24 hrs

Child Protection, **6207 1069**
Family Services Dept (North)
Level 2, Swanson Plaza, Belconnen 2617

www.decs.act.gov.au/services/fams_lv3.htm

For concerns about suspected child abuse and neglect.

Child Protection, **6207 1466**
Family Services Dept (South)
Ground floor Centrepoint Building,
Anketell St, Tuggeranong

www.decs.act.gov.au/services/fams_lv3.htm

Youthline (24 hours) **6257 2333**

Confidential phone-line offering information and referral.

Child Support Workers in Refuges

Most women's refuges in the ACT have Child Support Workers who offer support and counselling to children and young people resident in the refuge who have been affected by domestic and other violence.

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services **6205 1469**

Woden Youth Centre **6282 3037**
opp Woden Interchange,
Callum St, Woden 2606

www.wodenyouth.canberra.net.au

Offers a range of activities and support for young women & men

Civic Youth Centre **6247 0770**
14 Cooyong St, Civic 2601

Offers a range of activities and support for young women & men.

Child At Risk Assessment Unit **6244 2712**
c/o Social Work Dept,
Canberra Hospital, Woden 2606

Offers counselling for children and for the non-abusing care-giver, and assessments on children considered at risk of abuse.

Office of the Community Advocate **6207 0707**
GIO House, City Walk, Canberra City 2601

www.oca.act.gov.au

Provides advocacy for children and youth, & promotes their protection and rights.

Marymead Child & Family Centre **6295 2755**
PO Box 4260, Kingston 2604

www.program@marymead.org.au

Offers a range of services to children & families including a facility for supervised access of children for separated and divorced parents, medium to long term residential care, some places for children requiring intensive support, respite care, and medium to long term and crisis care in the community.

Parentlink 6205 8800
www.parentlink.act.gov.au

Parent Support Service 6278-3995 *
Provides confidential telephone counselling for anyone with parenting issues. The service operates between 9.00 and 5.00, Monday to Friday.

FACES 6239 5588
Provides mediation and family therapy for parents and adolescents in conflict to prevent homelessness. Also provides reconciliation when a young person is living at home.

The Junction 6247 5567
Is a health service specially for young people.

NSW Dept of Community Services 6299 1111
www.community.nsw.gov.au
For any concerns about children at risk of abuse and neglect in NSW.

Men and boys

Murringu Canberra Inc 6230 6999
The Men's Centre, Kootara Cres Narrabundah.
GPO Box 1753 Canberra 2601

A men's support network that provides a support and advisory service enabling men to meet life's challenges.

Young Men's Support Network 6282 2644
Offers counselling and support to young men affected by sexual abuse and assault.

Accommodation & Support for Men & Boys

There are a number of agencies that offer crisis, medium and longer term support and accommodation for men and boys. See the section on safe accommodation.

Mensline - Domestic Violence Crisis Service 6280 0900

SAMSSA 6232 7166
Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault
PO Box 94, Narrabundah 2604

www.apex.net.au/~samssa/
Counselling and support services for male sexual assault survivors, information about male sexual assault, and referral options. Community education, school programs, and professional development training.

Men's Accommodation & Crisis Service (MAACS) 6241 0433 *
A service provided by the Lone Fathers' Association.

Older people

ACT Council on the Ageing 6282 3777
Hughes Community Centre, Hughes 2605
www.cota-act.org.au
Offers information, advice and referrals to older people on a wide range of issues. Also can provide safety & security review of your home.

ACT Disability, Aged, & Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS) 6242 5060
2 Atherton St, Downer 2602
www.spirit.net.au/~adacas/
Offers a wide range of services, support and advocacy for people with disabilities, who are aged or who are caring for others.

Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders

Aboriginal Health Clinic 6249 7555
(Winnunga Nimmityjah)
91A Wakefield Gardens, Ainslie.

A health service especially for indigenous people offering a wide range of services, supports and referrals.

Aboriginal Women's Legal 1800 686 587
Resource Centre (NSW)
Suite 102, 2 Holt St, Stanmore NSW 2048

Provides a wide range of free legal advice, information and referral for Aboriginal women.

Wiradjuri Aboriginal Legal Service 6297 0755
c/o Munjuwa Aboriginal Corporation,
PO Box 682, Queanbeyan NSW 2620

Provides a wide range of free legal advice, information and referral for Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal Hostels Ltd 6289 1222
Bonner House, 7 Neptune St, Phillip 2606
www.ahl.gov.au

Offers referrals to a range of accommodation options for indigenous people.

South Eastern Aboriginal Legal Aid 6249 8488
Unit 4 Level 2 54 Northbourne Ave Canberra City

Gugan Gulwan Youth Centre 6295 8500

Aboriginal Liaison Workers
Many community and government agencies have Aboriginal support and liaison workers.

Magistrates Court Aboriginal Liaison Officer 6217 4444

Gay and lesbian

Gay Contact (ACT) 6247 2726
Offers information & referrals to gay men in the ACT Region.

Services for people from diverse backgrounds

Migrant Resource Centre 6248 8577 *
Griffin Centre, 19 Bunda St, Civic 2601
Offers a wide range of services and supports to people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Ethnic Communities Council 6249 8994
Griffin Centre, 19 Bunda St, Civic 2601
Offers information and advocacy for people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Companion House (formerly Transact) 6247 7227
Translating and Interpreter Service 13 1450

People with physical or mental disabilities

ACT Disability, Aged, & Carer 6242 5060
Advocacy Service (ADACAS)
2 Atherton St, Downer 2602
www.spirit.net.au/~adacas/
Offers a wide range of services, support and advocacy for people with disabilities, who are aged or who are caring for others.

People First 6286 9422
(Advocacy for people with any disability)
Pearce Community Centre, Pearce
Offers a wide range of services, support and advocacy for people with any disability.

**Disability Discrimination
Legal Advisory Service
Havelock House, Gould St, Turner 2612**

6247 2018

Thursdays 9.30 to 1.00

Fridays 1.30 to 5.00

Offers legal advice and assistance for people with disabilities who feel they may have been discriminated against.

Respite Care Services

6288 0955

Provides respite care services to people caring for an aged, incapacitated, infirm, or disabled person.

Richmond Fellowship

6248 6118 *

Provides programs for unemployed individuals, family support service, residential care for disadvantaged adolescents and semi-independent residential care for individuals with psychiatric problems.

Office of the Community Advocate

6207 0707

www.oca.act.gov.au

The Office of the Community Advocate acts to represent the best interests of people who come before the Mental Health Tribunal, and to represent the interests of people with a mental illness or dysfunction.

**Guardianship & Management
of Property Tribunal**

6217 4280

Magistrates Court, Knowles Place, Canberra

A guardian and/or financial manager may be appointed to represent the interests and to become a substitute decision-maker for a person with a physical, mental, psychological or intellectual condition under certain conditions.

Mental Health Tribunal

6217 4280

Magistrates Court, Knowles Place, Canberra

The Mental Health Tribunal may make orders in relation to people with mental illness or dysfunction.

Safe accomodation and support services

Referrals can be made and accomodation arranged through the Domestic Violence Crisis Service on 6280 0900 or by contacting agencies direct.

FOR WOMEN & GIRLS

Beryl Women's Refuge

6247 5689

Caroline Chisolm Refuge

6286 2173

Doris Women's Refuge

6241 7028

Louisa Women's Refuge

6299 4799

Toora Single Women's Shelter

6247 2399

Innana Women's Refuge

6295 3323

Northside DV Transit Flat Program

6249 1113

Weston Creek Women's Housing Program

6288 3038

Lowana Young Women's Refuge

6231 3297

FOR MEN & BOYS

Samaritan House (St Vincent de Paul)

6247 6691

Emmaus Ministries

6260 3501

Mary's Place

6299 1619

Mancare (Salvation Army)

6295 1256

MAACS

6241 0433

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Canberra Youth Refuge | 6247 0330 |
| Queanbeyan Youth Refuge | 6297 2651 |
| Youth Centre (LASA) | 6288 6248 |
| Lowana Young Women's Refuge | 6231 3297 |
| St Jude's Family Services | 6294 9034 |
| ACT Housing - all enquiries | 6207 1500 |

Other counselling and support services

Most counselling services charge either a small fee or fees on a sliding scale according to your income. Ask if there are any exemptions for low-income earners.

Relationships Australia **6281 3600**
15 Napier Close, Deakin 2600
www.relationships.com.au
Provides relationship counselling for individuals and couples, mediation for people considering separation or divorce, groups for women who have experienced violence, and for men who have used abusive behaviour toward their partners.

Canberra Mediation Service **6282 4300**
15 Napier Close, Deakin 2600
www.relationships.com.au
Provides a general mediation service to couples who seek to make arrangements for matters such as child residence and contact, and property settlements.

Family Court Counsellors **6267 0620**
cnr. Childers St and University Ave, Canberra 2600

The Family Court Counsellors provide a variety of counselling including relationship counselling which may involve issues surrounding residence and contact arrangements for children, provision of reconciliation counselling or referral as appropriate, and counselling to assist parents and their children to the consequences of separation.

National Association for Loss & Grief (NALAG) **6259 3940**
PO Box 581, Curtin 2605 **6259 3941 fax**
Provides counselling, support and information to any person affected by grief and loss.

Student Counselling Services
www.anu.edu.au/counsel/ **(ANU) 6249 2442**
www.canberra.edu.au/Student.html **(UCAN) 6201 2351**

Partners of Sexual Abuse Survivors **6249 7911**

CENTACARE **6239 7700**
Offers counselling on all issues to everyone.

St John's Care **6248 7771**
Offers counselling to everyone on all issues.

Salvation Army **6248 5504**
Offers a counselling service for people with needs relating to personal difficulties as well as marriage and family relationships.

Community Information & Referral Service **6248 7988**
Room GO3 Griffin Centre, Bunda St, Civic 2601
www.cirsact.org.au

Conflict Resolution Service **6295 5998**
C/- Canberra Business Centre,
281 Goyder Street, Narrabundah, 2604

Northside Community Services 6257 2255
Majura Community Centre,
Rosevear Pl, Dickson 2602

Southside Community Services 6295 7572
Boolimba Cres, Narrabundah 2604

Weston Creek Community Centre 6288 5649 *
Parkinson St, Weston

Coronial Support Service 0413 581 219
Provides information about the coronial system to family members of the deceased. Emergency counselling and support on crisis basis after death and short term counselling and referral to other agencies for longer term counselling.

Help for people wanting to stop using abuse

Relationships Australia 6281 3600
Offers a group for men, 'Learning to Relate without Abuse', who are ready to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour toward their partners.

Mensline 6280 0900

Legal and welfare advice

Legal Aid Office (ACT), 4 Mort St, Civic 2601

General Information 6243 3411
Appointments for Advice 6243 3471
Free Legal Advice 1300 654 314
After Hours Urgent Matters 019 440 084
Personal Protection Section 6217 4299

www.legalaid.canberra.net.au

Offers legal advice, assistance and representation in a wide range of matters including family law, personal protection, and civil and criminal law.

Legal Advice Bureau (ACT Law Society) 6247 5700
1 Farrell Place, Canberra City 2601

www.lawsocact.asn.au

Offers 15 minutes free legal advice on appointment in a wide range of legal issues

Women's Legal Centre 6257 4499 or
Havelock House, Gould St, 1800 634 669
Turner 2612 (Admin 6257 4377)

www.ozemail.com.au/~wlcact/

Provides legal information, advice and referrals for women on issues such as divorce & separation, disputes over children, property settlement, domestic violence, child support, going to court, sexual harassment and sex discrimination, unfair dismissal, other employment rights and compensation for criminal injury.

Welfare Rights and Legal Centre 6247 2177 *
Havelock House, Gould St, Turner 2612

Provides legal advice & assistance in income support, social security, tenancy, consumer credit, and legal aid appeals.

Aboriginal Legal Service 6297 0755

Provides legal information, advice, assistance and representation in a wide range of legal matters.

CARE Inc
(financial debt counselling & advice) 6257 1788

9th floor, FAI House,
cnr. London Circuit & Akuna St, Canberra

Free legal advice & representation may be available for people on low-incomes who have debt or other financial problems.

Prisoner's Aid Committee 6257 4866
GPO Box 112, Canberra City 2601

Provides information, assistance and referrals for people accused or convicted of criminal offences and their families.

Centrelink

13 24 68

For enquiries about your entitlements to income support and other benefits. Social workers are available in each of Centrelink's regional offices to assist a person with emotional and financial needs.

Child Support Agency

13 12 72

www.csa.gov.au

For enquiries about child support following separation and divorce. The Child Support Review Office is at 13 1141.

Criminal justice agencies

ACT Magistrates Court

6217 4444

(including Children's and Coroner's Courts)

Knowles Place, Canberra City 2601

www.courts.act.gov.au

Personal Protection Order Section

6217 4235

ACT Supreme Court

6267 2707

Knowles Place, Canberra City 2601

www.courts.act.gov.au

Office of the Director of

6247 3800

Public Prosecutions

Reserve Bank Building, London Circuit,
Canberra City 2601

www.dpp.act.gov.au

Australian Federal Police

11444

Attendance Line

Switchboard

6256 7777

Police Victim Liaison Officer (North)

6245 7441

Police Victim Liaison Officer (South)

6269 2706

Sexual Assault & Child Abuse Team

6256 7777

Woden Station, Bradley St, WODEN 2606

City Station, London Circuit, CANBERRA 2601

Tuggeranong Station, cnr. Soward & Athllon Dr, TUGGERANONG 2900

Belconnen Station, Lathlain St, BELCONNEN 2617

ACT Parole Board

6207 0744

GPO Box 158, Canberra 2601

ACT Corrective Services

6207 0888

Locked Bag 3000, Woden 2606

www.cs.act.gov.au/

Support

Support before, during or after court is provided by most support agencies listed in this booklet. Usually it is necessary to call and make arrangements first. The Court Assistance and Referral Service (CARS) is located on the ground floor of the Magistrates Court and can also provide assistance and information (6257 4866).

Health and community services

Community Health Centres are located in most parts of the ACT. Some provide limited counselling services and all can help with a range of health-related concerns.

Belconnen, cnr. Benjamin Way

6256 2222

City, Moore St

6205 4411

Narrabundah, Boolimba Cresc

6295 2077

Phillip, Corinna St

6205 1444

Tuggeranong, Anketell St

6293 5999

Complaints handling agencies

ACT Ombudsman

6276 0111

1 Farrell Place, Canberra City 2601

www.comb.gov.au

ACT Victims of Crime Coordinator 6257 8452
Magistrates Court, Level 2,
Knowles Place, Canberra City 2601

ACT Human Rights Office 6207 0576
Level 4, 4 Mort Street, Braddon
www.hro.act.gov.au

Health Complaints Commissioner 6205 2222
5th floor, 1 Moore St, Civic 2601

Office of the Community Advocate 6207 0707
Level 3, GIO House, City Walk, Civic 2601
www.oa.act.gov.au

Law Society of the ACT 6247 5700
1 Farrell Pl, Canberra 2601
www.lawsocact.asn.au

Coordinating bodies

Domestic Violence Prevention Council 6217 4235
GPO Box 370, Canberra 2601

Victims of Crime Co-ordinator 6257 8452
GPO Box 370, Canberra 2601

Domestic Violence Interagency c/o 6286 2043
A practitioner network to share information and resources.

New South Wales Information

Victims of Crime Bureau 1800 633 063 or
02 9374 3000

NSW Women's Legal Service 1800 801 501

Domestic Violence Advocacy Service 1800 810 784 or
02 9637 3741

Domestic Violence HelpLine 1800 65 64 63

NSW DPP Witness Assistance Service 02 9285 8949

NSW Dept of Community Services 6299 1111

Queanbeyan Multi-Lingual Centre 6297 6110

