

to “be more patient with him” or “try harder”, but by believing her and offering support. The community can help by speaking out against domestic violence and saying it is unacceptable.



English
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Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.

Domestic violence hurts the whole family

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NSW HEALTH
DEPARTMENT

Domestic violence hurts the whole family.

If you think women are most at risk from violence out on the streets away from the safety of home, you'd be mistaken.

Women are more likely to be attacked in their own houses by people they live with. Domestic violence, which affects women of all ages and from all countries, is a type of abuse which takes many different forms.

Besides physical violence it can include threats, insults or sexual assault. It can also include interfering with someone's personal freedom by keeping them away from their family or friends, or withholding money to which they're entitled. These types of abuse have one thing in common - they're ways which someone (usually a man, but occasionally a woman) uses to control his partner and sometimes other members of the family.

Some people believe this abuse is a private matter to be dealt with by the family. But in Australia domestic violence is a crime and families have the right to be protected against it. Hiding it behind closed doors allows the abuse to continue, inflicting physical and emotional damage on family members. If nothing is done about it, the abuse usually gets worse, sometimes resulting in serious injury or death.

Even if only one person - often a man's partner - is the target of the abuse, it still affects others in the family. Children growing up in abusive families may develop problems themselves - they may feel that adults, especially males, can't be trusted; they may develop problems with alcohol or other drugs. When they grow up to have partners and children of their own they may become abusive towards them. This is why

we can't say domestic violence is no one else's business - it's a problem affecting the whole of society.

Many women put up with domestic violence for years. Sometimes it's because they feel they "deserve" it, or they excuse it because of other problems such as gambling, alcohol or relationship problems. But no one deserves this abuse, and there are no excuses for it.

How can women protect themselves and their children from domestic violence? There are services which can help by offering counselling, legal advice or emergency accommodation. A GP, community health centre or women's health centre can put you in touch with them. Information is also available by dialing the Domestic Violence Hotline on 1800 65 64 63. If you have difficulty communicating in English, the Translating and Interpreting Service on 13 14 50 can help you make the call. If a woman decides to leave the relationship, she may need legal advice and help to get an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO). This is a legal procedure which acts as a warning to a man not to assault, threaten or intimidate his partner. If he disobeys the order, he can be arrested by the police.

Legal advice and help to obtain an AVO is available from the Chamber Magistrate at the local court. Some courts also have the Domestic Violence Assistance Scheme, which uses bi-lingual workers or interpreters to help people who speak little or no English.

Seeking help can be a difficult step to take - but it's the first step towards a more peaceful family life.

People with a friend or relative experiencing domestic violence can help too. Not by telling her she must be exaggerating, or