



White Ribbon

6. Family and domestic violence

Domestic violence is a widespread though often hidden problem across Australia. It occurs in all parts of society, regardless of geographic location, socio-economic status, age, cultural and ethnic background, or religious belief, and its often devastating effects — psychological, social and economic, short-term and long-term — rebound on families, children, and the community as a whole.

What is domestic violence?

The term 'domestic violence' refers to interpersonal violence which takes place in domestic settings, family relationships, and intimate relationships, and is most commonly applied to violence by a man to his wife, female sexual partner or ex-partner. However, 'domestic violence' is used also to refer to violence between same sex sexual partners, among family members (including siblings and parent-child violence either way), and by women against male partners. Three other terms commonly applied to some or all of these forms of violence are family violence, men's violence against women, and intimate violence, while newer terms include relationship violence, intimate partner violence, and gender-based violence.¹

Domestic violence (sometimes called 'family violence') can take many different forms including intimidation, coercion or isolation, emotional, physical, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse.²

Australian police and court crime data indicate that women constitute a significant proportion of reported victims of intimate partner violence, while men make up a significant proportion of reported abusers. These data tend to focus on physical and sexual violence. Australian population survey data similarly show that women were more likely than men to be victims of physical, sexual and other forms of violence by a partner.³

Domestic violence is generally understood as gendered violence, and is an abuse of power within a relationship (heterosexual or homosexual) or after separation. In the large majority of cases the offender is male and the victim is female.⁴

More than two decades of international research definitively shows that infants, children and adolescents

experience serious negative psychological, emotional, social and developmental impacts to their well-being from the traumatic ongoing experiences of domestic violence.⁵

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities prefer the term 'family violence'. 'Family' covers a diverse range of ties of mutual obligation and support, and perpetrators and victims of family violence can include, for example, aunts, uncles, cousins and children of previous relationships.

Domestic or family violence may involve a wide range of behaviours, including:

Physical abuse - including direct assaults on the body, use of weapons, driving dangerously, destruction of property, abuse of pets in front of family members, assault of children, locking the victim out of the house, and sleep deprivation.

Sexual abuse - any form of forced sex or sexual degradation, such as sexual activity without consent, causing pain during sex, assaulting the genitals, coercive sex without protection against pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease, making the victim perform sexual acts unwillingly, criticising, or using sexually degrading insults.

Verbal abuse - continual 'put downs' and humiliation, either privately or publicly, with attacks following clear themes that focus on intelligence, sexuality, body image and capacity as a parent and spouse.

Emotional abuse - 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 (eg weeks of silence).

Social abuse - systematic isolation from family and friends through techniques such as ongoing rudeness to family and friends, moving to locations where the victim knows nobody, and forbidding or physically preventing the victim from going out and meeting people — in effect, imprisonment.

Spiritual abuse - denying access to ceremonies, land or family, preventing religious observance, forcing victims to do things against their beliefs, denigration of cultural background, or using religious teachings or cultural tradition as a reason for violence.

Economic abuse - complete control of all monies, no access to bank accounts, providing only an inadequate 'allowance', using any wages earned by the victim for household expenses.

1 Flood M & Fergus L 2008. An assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships. Sydney: White Ribbon Foundation. < <http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/AssaultonourFutureFinal.pdf> >

2 Safe At Home Safe at Work. University of New South Wales - www.dvnetwork.unsw.edu.au/what-you-need-know

3 Meyering I & Braaf R 2013. Gender and intimate partner violence. Sydney: Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. < http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Fast_Facts_9.pdf >

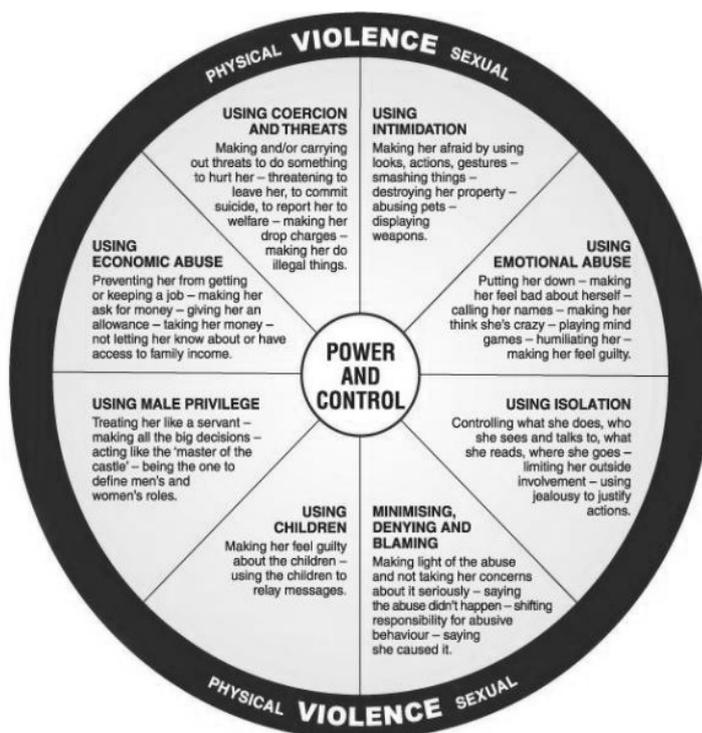
4 Vic Health,(2003) Public Health, Mental Health & Violence against Women

5 Sety, M. (2011) The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children: A Literature Review, University of New South Wales

Healthy or abusive relationships...

Characteristics of SAFE AND HEALTHY Relationships	Characteristics of ABUSIVE Relationships
Partnerships Joint decision making Shared responsibilities	Domination Abuser decides Servant/master mentality
Economic Equality Freedom to decide issues of work, school and money	Economic Control Deny job freedom Withhold money
Emotional Honesty Feel safe to admit and share fears and insecurities	Physical Abuse: hit, choke, kick, pinch, pull hair, poke, twist arms, trip, bite, restrain, use weapons
Sexual Respect Accept that "no" means no	Emotional Manipulation Use jealousy, passion, stress and frustration to justify actions
Physical Safety Respect partner's physical space Express self non-violently	Sexual Abuse Force partner to do things against her/his will
Respect Respect right to differing feelings, friends and activities Support partner's goals	Intimidation Charming in public, menacing in private Destroy property or pets Make light of abuse: "You're too sensitive"
Support and trust Listen and understand Value partner's opinion	Control Name calling and mind games Isolate partner from friends and loved ones

Power and Control Cycle

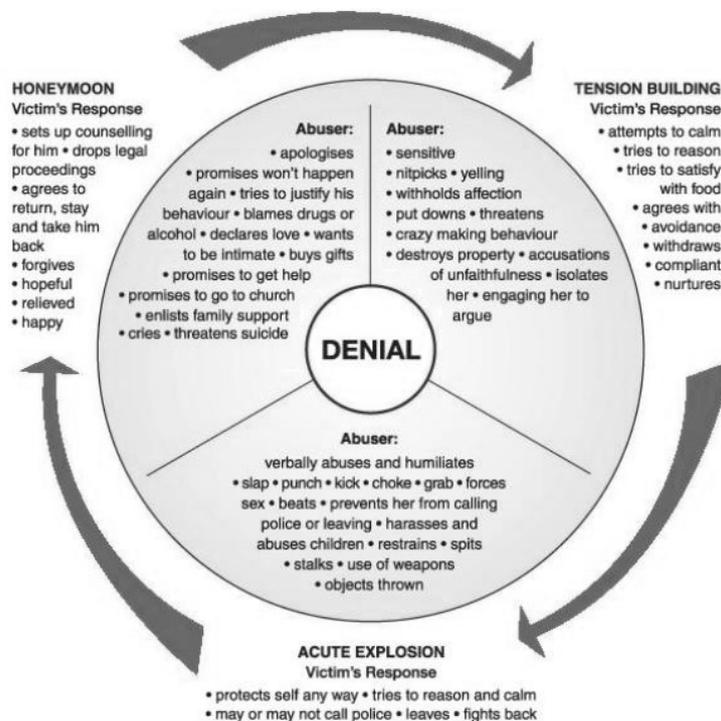


©Pence and Paymar (1986).

Reference: Pence, E. & Paymar, M. (1986).

Power and Control Tactics of Men who Batter.
Duluth, MN: Minnesota Program Development, Inc

Cycle of Violence



Adapted from Lenore Walker, *The Battered Woman* (1986)

Reference: Walker, L. E. (1979). *The Battered Woman*. New York: Harper & Row.
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Reference: Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services, Western Australia. (2008)