

Taking action against violence, abuse and harassment

We all need to speak out against men's violence against women.

Silence and inaction will let this violence continue.

Sometimes it is hard to know what to say and how to act, and you may feel uncomfortable about speaking out. In this factsheet, you will find some tools to help you.

Above all, remember to keep yourself and others safe.

Call 000 in an emergency.

Intervening in violent situations

This is what you can do when you see violence:

- **Stay safe:** Safety is vital in deciding when and how to respond to violence when it is occurring. If the situation is already violent and looks like it is escalating quickly, don't directly intervene. Call the police.
- **Create a distraction¹:** an indirect and non-confrontational distraction can help disrupt the situation. You can do this by starting a conversation with the victim or perpetrator about anything, for example the weather. This can help keep a potentially dangerous situation from getting worse.
- **Watch:** stand a safe distance away so the violent person knows they are being watched.
- **Ask for help from people near you:** speak out together to tell the violent person that his actions are unacceptable.
- **Support the victim:** talk to the woman to show your support. Ask if she needs help.

Signs that a woman may be experiencing violence and abuse

Most violence against women happens in the home and other private placesⁱⁱ, so you probably won't see it happening. Here are signs that a woman is experiencing violence and abuseⁱⁱⁱ:

- She often mentions that her partner is 'jealous' or has a 'bad temper'.
- She is afraid of her partner and tries hard to please him.
- Her partner criticises and humiliates her in public.
- She has become increasingly anxious or depressed, has lost confidence or is unusually quiet.
- She has physical injuries (for example bruises, cuts and sprains) and gives unlikely explanations for these injuries.
- She tells you that her partner pressures or forces her to perform sexual acts.
- Her partner makes all the decisions, for example he controls the finances and tells her who she can and can't see.
- Her children seem frightened of her partner, have behavioural issues or are withdrawn and anxious.
- She doesn't want to leave her children alone with her partner.
- If she has left the relationship, her ex-partner calls or emails her constantly, follows her, comes to her house uninvited or waits for her at work.

Supporting women

If you feel comfortable approaching the woman, you can speak to her and simply say, "I'm concerned about what just happened. Are you OK?". Let her know that violence and abuse are wrong and that she does not deserve it.

Tell her that you are willing to help. Let her know about local support services that offer free and confidential advice and offer to help her access these services if she needs extra support.

Read the White Ribbon factsheet 'What to do when someone tells you about their experience of violence or abuse' for more information about what to do.





Remember!

A woman may be worried that she is putting herself in greater danger from the man using violence by sharing her experience with you. You must respect her concerns and reassure her that she did the right thing by telling you about the violence. Do not force her into making any decisions and keep all information confidential unless children are involved and you have an obligation to inform Police in your State or Territory.

If you are a student, you can ask a teacher, social worker or doctor for some advice about what to do.

Talking to men who are using violence against women

If you talk to someone you think is violent to their partner or another person, they may tell you to mind your own business, make excuses or deny it.

If you see abuse, **and you feel safe or able to**, talk about the behaviour you have seen. For example:

"You are my friend, but I think the way you criticise and scare her is wrong."

"It is not okay to hit a woman. This is a problem and I think you need to get some help."

Let him know about support services that offer free and confidential advice such as MensLine **1800 600 636**.

¹No More (2016) While it's occurring. Retrieved from: <http://nomore.org/how-to-help/while-its-occurring/>

²Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women in Australia: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012. ANROWS: Alexandria pps. 37, 63, 98.

³From: Domestic Violence Resource Centre, Victoria: www.dvrcv.org.au