

Myths and reality

MYTH: Women should just leave abusive relationships

REALITY: It's not that easy. Women stay in abusive relationships for many reasons:

- Fear the violence will get worse if they leave, they will be followed and harmed
- Intimidation and control by male partner
- Believing violence is normal
- Financial dependence
- Social embarrassment
- Lack of self-confidence
- Isolation
- Cultural background
- Religious and moral values
- Concern for children
- Family pressure
- Lack of community support

What you can say:

“ There are many reasons why a woman can't just leave. Her choices can be limited in ways that we can't always understand. ”

MYTH: Some women provoke violence and deserve it

REALITY: No one has permission to hurt a woman. The man using violence is responsible for the violence. He has no right to use violence regardless of how angry he may be. There are many non-violent ways to resolve an argument.

What you can say:

“ No woman deserves to be abused. Men who use violence are the only ones responsible for their actions. They have made a decision to use violence. ”

Remember: blaming women for the violence of men is victim blaming.

MYTH: Men's violence against women is caused by men using drugs and alcohol

REALITY: Alcohol and drugs are a contributing factor to men's violence against women, but alcohol and drugs do not cause the violence.

This myth is sometimes used to excuse men's violence. Men's violence against women is caused by the attitudes and behaviours associated with traditional masculine gender roles. They put women in a subordinate position to men.

What you can say:

“ Drugs and alcohol can contribute to violence, but they do not cause it. It is the attitudes and behaviours of these men that cause this violence. ”

MYTH: Family violence is a private matter

REALITY: Family violence is not a private matter. It is a criminal offence in Australia. Family violence impacts everyone in the community. It impacts on a woman's ability to lead a productive life and also affects children and families.

What you can say:

“ Domestic violence is not a private matter. It impacts on women, families and the community. We all have a role to play to stop this violence. We will all benefit from ending men's violence against women. ”

MYTH: Violence doesn't impact on children. They don't remember it and are too young to understand what is going on

REALITY: Children can be physically and emotionally harmed by violence at any age. It impacts on children's self-esteem, confidence, education and their future relationships. Children may learn violent behaviours and continue them as an adult. Or they may think violence is normal and continue to experience it as adults. With the right help and support, children can recover.

What you can say:

“ Seeing violence or being a victim of it can do serious damage to a child. It can have a lasting negative impact on them. ”

MYTH: Only certain types of men are violent

REALITY: Men who use violence come from all social, economic, and cultural backgrounds and family situations.

Men's violence against women occurs across Australia and across all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, educational levels, occupations, socio-economic statuses and sexual orientations.

What you can say:

“ This isn't about where you live, your job or your religion – men from all backgrounds use violence against women. ”

MYTH: Violence only affects a small number of Australian women

REALITY: Statistics show that in Australia, 1 in 3 women experiences physical or sexual violence in their lifetimeⁱ. Domestic and family violence is the principle cause of homelessness for women and their childrenⁱⁱ. 1 in 4 children are exposed to domestic violence.ⁱⁱⁱ

What you can say:

“ Think of 3 women you know. Statistics show that 1 in 3 women will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. ”

MYTH: There is nothing we can do to stop violence against women

REALITY: Some people think rape and domestic violence is a normal part of society or that men are 'born that way' and cannot control themselves or change. This is not true and is a negative perspective on men that is harmful to both men and women.

Violence against women is caused by gender inequality that puts women in a subordinate position to men, creating social conditions where men's violence against women is tolerated and even accepted as normal.

What you can say:

“ No one is born violent. Violence is something that some men learn. With the right support, men can change their attitudes and behaviours to stop this violence. ”

MYTH: Men who use violence are mentally ill

REALITY: There is no evidence to support this^{iv}. Men with no signs of mental health issues can be violent. The majority of people living with mental health issues have respectful relationships and do not use violence.

What you can say:

“ Men who use violence against women come from all backgrounds and do not necessarily have a mental health issue. There is no excuse for violence and abuse. ”

ⁱAustralian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Personal Safety, Australia, 2012* (no. 4906.0).

ⁱⁱAustralian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2014). *Specialist homelessness services: 2013–2014*, cat. no. HOU 276.

ⁱⁱⁱAustralian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse. (2011). *The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children: A Literature Review*.

^{iv}See SANE Australia for more information: <https://www.sane.org/mental-health-and-illness/facts-and-guides/mental-illness-and-violence>