

For Men Involved In Domestic Violence

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Introduction

Domestic violence is often talked about in whispers and behind closed doors but it is important to recognise that men experience domestic violence, both as victims and perpetrators.

This booklet aims to provide an introduction to domestic violence and help both victims and perpetrators of domestic

violence to make the first step towards breaking free. This section of the booklet is aimed at men who think they may be abusing someone; if you feel you are the victim of domestic violence and abuse then you may want to read the other section of the booklet first.



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What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is described by the Home Office as 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'

There are lots of different forms of domestic violence, but basically it is the misuse of power and exercise of control of one adult over another. Domestic violence may be a one-off incident or may be repeated many times - each incident helps the perpetrator gain greater power and control over the victim.

Some organisations use the term 'violence', some use 'abuse'; in this booklet the terms are interchangeable.

Victims can be men or women, and perpetrators can be men or women. Domestic violence can occur in any relationship - gay/straight, old/young. Research suggests that gay, bisexual & transgender men experience domestic violence and abuse at slightly higher levels than heterosexual women.

Victims of domestic violence often lose the freedom to make choices about their own lives and their health, employment, finances and housing situation can all suffer.

Two women are murdered every week by a current or former male partner and approximately 27 men every year are killed by a partner or ex-partner every year.

There are different types of domestic

violence. Individuals might experience one or more types, and none is more, or less, acceptable than any of the others. The following is a general list and everyone has different experiences of abuse. A great deal of abuse happens behind closed doors, the first step out of the situation for perpetrators as well as victims is breaking the silence and getting some help. At the end of this section are some telephone numbers and websites where you can get information and support to make that first step.

Physical abuse

Probably the easiest type of abuse to identify and includes: pushing, biting, hitting, punching, slapping, burning, strangling, and kicking or using a weapon, throwing things and ultimately, murder.

Emotional or psychological abuse

This can include: constant criticism and belittling comments, threats to your partner, their family, the children. Embarrassing or humiliating your partner in private or publicly, lying, making them feel stupid or crazy. Isolating them from friends and family, controlling where they go and what they do. Harassing and following them, checking up on them, opening their mail, checking their mobile phone.

Domestic violence can happen in any relationship and can happen to anyone.



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Verbal abuse

This can range from constant criticism, sexualised taunts and humiliation in public, through name calling to out-and-out foulmouthed abuse.

Sexual abuse

This includes all forced and unwanted sexual activity. It may also include withholding affection to ‘punish’ them for not obeying

your rules. This can also include them feeling, or being, forced to have sex when they don’t want to.

Financial abuse

Obsessive control of all monies so that they do not know what is being spent and when. Having to ask you for money and account for what they have spent. Being suddenly faced with huge debts that they knew nothing about.

Are you inflicting domestic violence or abuse on someone else?

Victims of domestic abuse are not the only ones who need help. It takes strength to admit that you are abusing your partner and courage to change.

Recognising that your actions are damaging both your partner and your relationship is the first step to breaking the cycle of domestic violence. Some perpetrators have experienced abuse themselves and it can be challenging to recognise that you are now in the role of the abuser and that:

- You only need to abuse once to be an abuser.
- The impact of abuse doesn't stop when you do.
- However, you can stop and it is vital that you choose to do so.
- Abuse affects children, whether they see it or not.

There is help and support for abusers and the sooner you get help the better it is for both you and your partner.

Steps towards stopping the abuse

Step 1

- Recognise that you are abusive in your relationship.
- Ask yourself if your partner is frightened of you?
- Is your relationship suffering because of your behaviour?
- Domestic abuse comes in many forms, but it is always about control – forcing your partner to do what you want, when you want.

Step 2

- Recognise that your abusive behaviour affects your whole family.
- Violence and abuse have a devastating effect on children. You may think that your children do not know what is going on because you are not abusive in front of them, but they will hear the abuse and sense the tension in the family. There is a lot of evidence to show that children are harmed by abuse even if they do not witness it. Alternatively they could be caught in the crossfire or may intervene to protect your partner.

Step 3

- Choose to stop.
- Decide that you no longer want to control and abuse. Only you can take control over your own behaviour and learn not to be violent and abusive whatever the situation.

Step 4

- Take responsibility for your behaviour and for the abuse. Stop blaming your actions on your partner or on anything else, such as drink, drugs, stress or unemployment.
- Do not minimise your behaviour by

thinking that it isn't too bad. How bad does it need to be before you do anything?

Step 5

- Seek help.
- You can promise yourself over and over again that it won't happen again, but it probably will if you do nothing more. Do something before the next time.

Other steps that might help

Spot the warning signs!

- Be aware when things are heating up and when you are getting into a situation where you may be abusive towards your partner.
- Make a note of your *sore spots*. These may be typical situations when you have been abusive before.
- Think about what is happening to you physically as you begin to become violent and abusive – your *physical warning signs*.
- Think about what you begin to do. Do you point your finger, close your fist, pace up and down, shout, glare, interrupt, go quiet, issue orders, get right up close?
- Watch out for feelings that come just before you become abusive or violent. Do you feel resentment? Anger? Trapped? Guilty? Upset? Hurt? These are your *emotional warning signs*.
- Think about the negative things that you are saying to yourself as you get closer to being abusive – these are your *mental warning signs*. These will be negative things about your partner, things to justify your actions such as 'he/she is doing this deliberately.'
- Note also the things that you do not say to yourself such as how your partner is

feeling, or trying to understand or listen to what your partner is saying. *Remember – it is never too late to make another choice*

- You can walk away.
- Right up to the moment you are abusive or violent, you can choose to do otherwise.

Take time out!

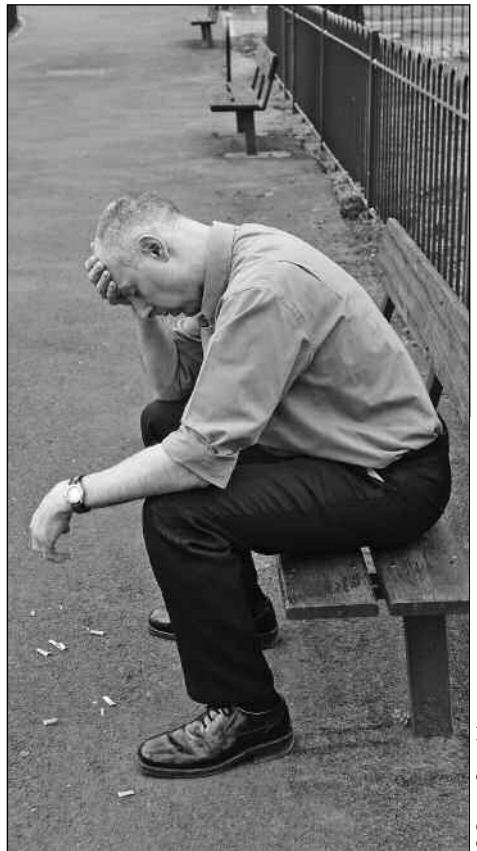
Time out is the most basic alternative to being violent – if you are not near to your partner you cannot hurt or abuse them. It gives you space to calm down and reflect on your behaviour.

- Once you spot warning signs, you should get away for *exactly* one hour and leave the situation before things build up and you are violent.
- Calm yourself down. Walk, take some exercise, meditate or pray – or it may help to talk to a friend who is supporting you in being non abusive.
- Examine your behaviour. Think about your behaviour and any negative thoughts that you were having. Think about alternatives to your behaviour and what you are going to do or say when you get back to your partner. Remember you will need to be able to return and be different, rather than try to make your partner different.
- After an hour return home. Before you return home, call your partner to let them know that you have calmed down and are returning. If your partner wants to discuss the situation with you, do so in a non abusive and non blaming way. Do not force someone to talk to you when you want, as that would also be abusive. Respect your partner's wish not to discuss the situation and wait for a mutually convenient opportunity.
- Talk to your partner about Time Outs so

that your partner knows ahead of time what strategy you are using to manage your violence.

Talk to a professional or join a programme.

It is not normally possible for perpetrators of domestic abuse to solve all their problems themselves. Once you have identified that you have a problem, get help and support from one of the agencies listed later who will be able to advise you what to do next, or direct you to a programme near you.



Support information – where you can get help

All of these agencies are confidential and have trained staff and volunteers who can listen to you, help you talk through your situation and work out what you want to do next.

Respect

Advice and information for men who are using violence in their relationships. Also has information about projects where you can go to get help to stop your violence and details of support services and programmes for perpetrators.

The Respect Phonenumber offers information and advice to domestic violence perpetrators, their (ex)partners, friends and family and to frontline workers who come into contact with perpetrators in their work. 0845 122 8609 (same cost as a local call if you ring from a landline)

RNID typetalk – textphone users dial 18001 0845 122 8609

Language line – If English is not your first language, call us and ask for an interpreter 07624 818 326 (for text messages only)

phoneline@respect.uk.net
www.respect.uk.net

The Samaritans

If you think you might benefit from confidential emotional support then the

Samaritans are here for you. You do not have to be suicidal to contact them. The Samaritans will not judge you if you call. The Samaritans understand that sometimes it can feel difficult to pick up the telephone.

08457 90 90 90

www.samaritans.org.uk

How the NHS can help

The NHS is working to ensure that there is a good level of knowledge about domestic violence and the support that is available locally through community pharmacists, general practitioners, practice nurses, accident and emergency departments and other front line services. If you present at any of these services you should be helped to find the support you need. Conversations with healthcare professionals are confidential and the healthcare professional should ask you before they contact any services or support agencies. You may find that having the conversation in confidence with them may help you take the first step towards breaking the cycle of violence. NHS Direct has information on domestic violence on their website or you can call them for advice. 0845 46 47

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

For Men Affected by Domestic Violence

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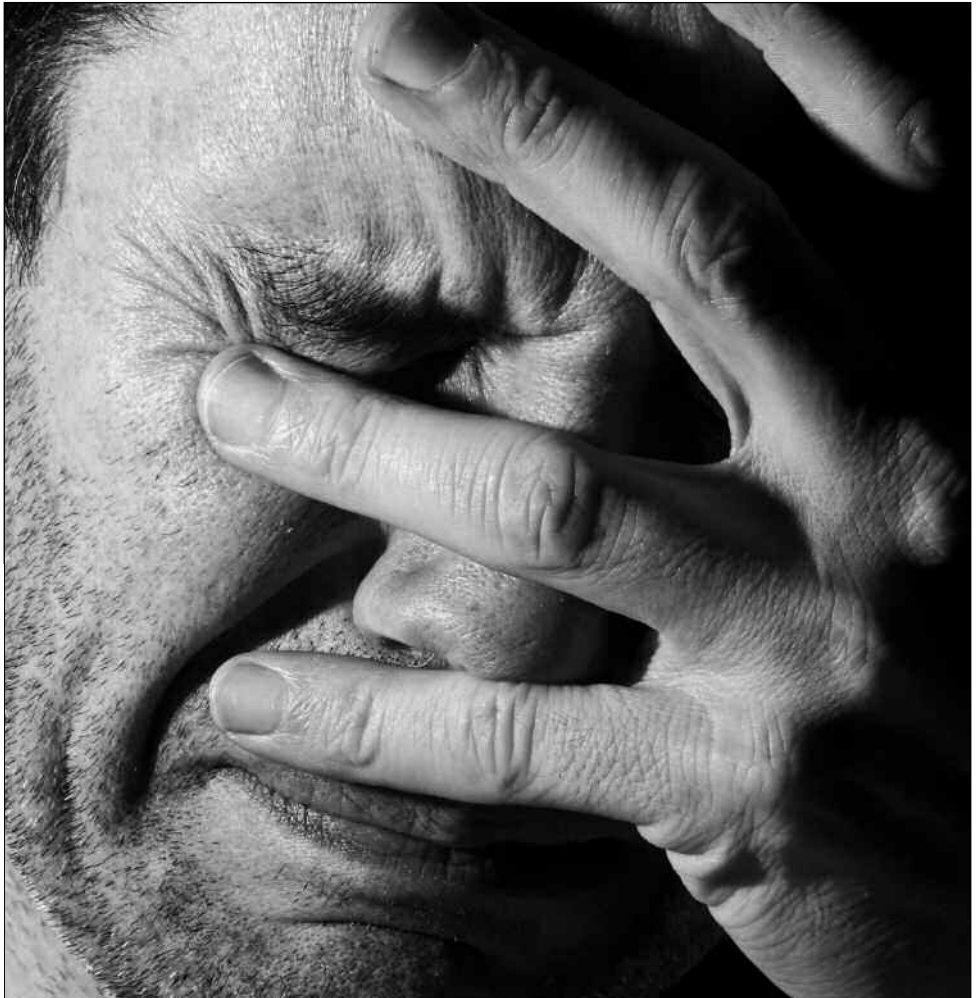
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Victims can be men or women, and perpetrators can be men or women. Domestic violence can occur in any relationship - gay/straight, old or young.

Research suggests that gay, bisexual and transgender men experience domestic violence and abuse at slightly higher levels than heterosexual women.

The British Crime Survey in 2005/06 found that 20% of domestic violence victims were men and in these cases just under half had a female abuser. Between 1 in 6 and 1 in 7 men will be affected by domestic violence from partners, ex-partners or family members in their lifetime. Around 27 men a year are killed by current or former partners in domestic violence incidents.

There are different types of domestic violence. Individuals might experience one or

more types, and none is more or less acceptable than any of the others. The following is a general list and everyone has different experiences of abuse. A great deal of abuse happens behind closed doors; the first step out of the situation is breaking the silence and getting some help. At the end of this section are some telephone numbers and websites where you can get information and support to make that first step.

Physical abuse

Probably the easiest type of abuse to identify and includes: pushing, biting, hitting, punching, slapping, burning, strangling and kicking or using a weapon, throwing things and, ultimately, murder. Research has shown that women can be physically abusive to male (and female) partners, and that there are many men who experience physical abuse: you are not alone.

Emotional or psychological abuse

This can include: constant criticism and belittling comments, threats to you, your family, the children. Embarrassing or humiliating you in private or publicly, lying, making you feel that you are stupid or crazy. Isolating you from friends and family, controlling where you go and what you do. Harassing and following you, checking up on you, opening your mail, checking your mobile phone.

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This can range from constant criticism, sexualised taunts and humiliation in public, through name calling to out-and-out foulmouthed abuse.

Sexual abuse

This includes all forced and unwanted sexual activity. It may also include withholding affection to ‘punish’ you for not obeying

their rules. This can also include feeling or being forced to have sex when you don’t want to.

Financial abuse

Obsessive control of all monies so that you do not know what is being spent and when. Having to ask for money and account for what you have spent. Being suddenly faced with huge debts that you knew nothing about.

Are you being abused?

Each person's experience will be unique but if you are in an abusive relationship you may feel some or all of the following:

- Isolated. You may be afraid to tell anyone what is really going on for fear of being disbelieved or ridiculed. Men who are being abused may think that they will not be taken seriously or be unsure of whether they can actually be a 'victim' of domestic abuse.
- Confused about why a person you love can treat you this way, or confused because sometimes they are loving and kind.
- Confused about what they are saying with messages like 'I hate you' or later on 'don't leave me'.
- Frustrated and sad because you feel that you have tried everything and still cannot sort the relationship out.
- Depressed or anxious, humiliated by the ongoing abuse.
- Constantly on edge and worried about how your partner will react.
- Threatened by the behaviour of your partner.
- Guilty about leaving them, scared that you will not be able to find a new partner and live alone. Or scared of what will happen to your children and your relationship with them.
- Worried about financial security if you leave.
- Afraid of the repercussions if you take any action – like continued violence, becoming homeless, or losing contact with the children.
- Feeling paralysed – whatever you do will only make things worse.



Myth Busting

Men aren't victims of domestic violence

Many men who experience domestic abuse from a current or former partner find it difficult to get support not least because it can be hard for men to acknowledge and discuss their experiences. This silence can be due to any number of reasons, including love for a partner, embarrassment or shame and concern for any children, or simply not knowing where to go.

Even so, it is vital you seek help if you are a victim of domestic abuse or are becoming one. Do not suffer in silence as there are people who can help you to live in a safer environment that is free of violence and abuse.

Men should be able to handle it

No one should have to live with violence, fear or abuse.

Men who experience domestic abuse are not 'real men'

Domestic abuse is about power and control of one person over another. It can happen to any man, in both heterosexual and gay

relationships and does not indicate that the man is 'weak' or 'ineffectual'.

The abuser cannot help it

There are many excuses given for violence and abusive behaviour: alcohol, stress, drugs, hormones, oppression, the inability to express feelings in any other way, anger, a traumatic childhood. But domestic abuse is chosen behaviour and there are no excuses for one person treating another in an aggressive and bullying way.

Ignoring it will make it go away

Men who experience domestic abuse may try different techniques to cope. Coping strategies include adopting an 'I can handle this' attitude, being careful about what you say, when and how you say it. You may have given up doing anything likely to upset your partner. Adapting your behaviour to do what they demand.

- Sleeping somewhere where you feel safer, including the car, hostels or at friends.
- By staying late at work to avoid going home.
- Using drugs or alcohol.
- Leaving home.

Coping may make life temporarily easier but it is unlikely to stop the abuse.

What you can do

- Recognising that you are in an abusive relationship is an important first act. Things will not change for the better if you do nothing.
- Keep a record of dates and times of incidents.
- Report the violence to the police – visit your local station and ask to speak to a Domestic Violence Officer in confidence.
- Seek medical attention for any injuries – do not cover up the true cause.
- Seek legal advice.
- Tell trusted family and friends what is going on.
- Make safety arrangements such as organising a safe place to go, changing your telephone number and locks.
- Protect the children.
- Do not be provoked into retaliating, or you could find yourself being arrested.
- Talk over your situation with one of the national or local domestic violence support agencies - there are details at the end of this section.



Support information – where to get help

All of these agencies are confidential and have trained staff and volunteers who can listen to you, help you talk through your situation and work out what you want to do next.

Men's Advice Line

This is a help-line in England and Wales providing support for male victims of domestic violence. There is lots of useful information on their website and they also have language and translation services. The helpline also provides support to families and friends of men who are victims of domestic violence.

0808 801 0327 (free from most landlines and mobile phones)

www.mensadvice.org.uk

Broken Rainbow

Support for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people suffering domestic abuse in the UK.

08452 60 44 60

www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

Survivors UK

A national organisation providing information, support and counselling for men who have been raped or sexually abused. Thousands of men contact them every year and their website is a great resource. They also have a national helpline. 0845 122 1201 (7pm to 10pm Mon/Tue/Thu)

www.survivorsuk.org.uk

Victim Support

Victim Support is the national charity which helps people affected by crime. They provide

free and confidential support to help you deal with your experience, whether or not you report the crime.

0800 30 30 900

www.victimsupport.org

The Samaritans

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www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk