

What is domestic & family violence?



Domestic and family violence (DFV) happens when someone uses violence, threats, intimidation, or controlling behaviours that make you feel scared or take away your choices. It can also affect your children, pets, or other loved ones.

DFV can happen to anyone, in any relationship, regardless of gender, sexuality, age, culture, religion, or financial situation.

DFV is never your fault.

Everyone deserves to feel safe, respected, and supported in their relationships.

DFV can look like:

Verbal abuse

Criticising, humiliating, or manipulating you to lower your self-esteem.

Coercive control

Controlling where you go, who you talk to, or how you live your life.

Gaslighting

Denying events, twisting facts, or making you question your memory or reality.

Financial abuse

Controlling your ability to access or earn money or putting debt in your name.

Stalking and tech-based abuse

Tracking your messages, social media, or location, or showing up uninvited.

Spiritual abuse

Using religion or cultural beliefs to control or intimidate you.

Physical or sexual abuse

Hurting you physically or forcing you into sexual situations you don't want.

Elder & child abuse

Any type of abuse or neglect directed at someone aged 65+ or under 18.

Non-physical abuse can be just as damaging as physical violence and may be harder to recognise.

Signs & effects

DFV can look and feel different for everyone, but common experiences include:

- 
Feeling on edge or anxious
 It's like you're always walking on eggshells to avoid conflict.
- 
Making excuses
 Justifying someone's words or actions, even when they hurt you
- 
Carrying feelings of shame
 You might feel a deep sense of guilt or self-doubt that's hard to shake.
- 
Questioning your memory
 Manipulation might leave you doubting yourself.
- 
Pulling away from others
 You might withdraw from people or activities you once enjoyed.
- 
Feeling stuck or helpless
 It may seem like there's no safe or realistic way to leave.
- 
Using alcohol or drugs to cope
 You're trying to numb the pain or escape difficult emotions.
- 
Thinking it's your fault
 Emotional abuse can make it hard to see the truth.

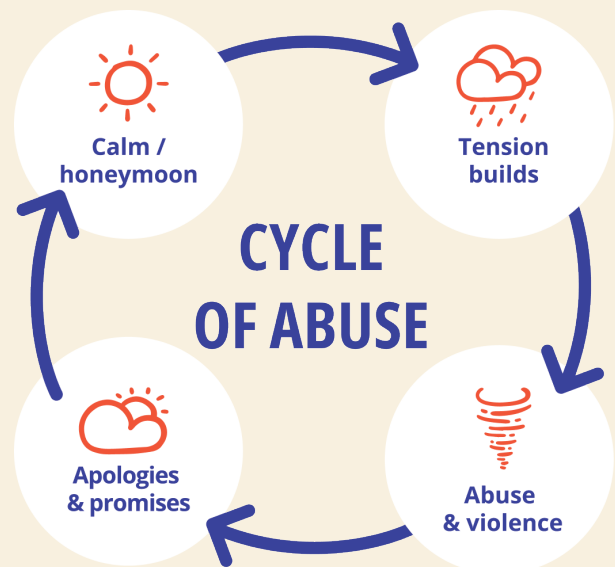
It's common to feel confused about what you're experiencing.

This confusion can happen when the other person uses forms of emotional abuse like gaslighting that can leave you questioning your sanity or feeling like you're the one to blame.

Recognising the cycle of abuse

Many abusive relationships follow a cycle of abuse, where hurtful behaviour is followed by promises of change. This can make it hard to leave.

The more this cycle repeats, it can feel even harder to break. Being in a cycle of abuse is never your fault, and it is possible to break free.






Wherever you are, help is at your fingertips with the **Support Toolkit**

👉 lifeline.org.au/toolkit

Why is it so hard to leave?

Leaving an abusive relationship can feel overwhelming or even impossible. Some common reasons include:

-  Fearing for your safety or your children's safety.
-  Not having support or a safe place to go.
-  Relying on the other person for money and financial security.
-  Facing threats or intimidation from the other person.
-  Feeling ashamed or having low self-esteem due to the abuse.
-  Still loving the other person or hoping that things will get better.

Leaving can be one of the most dangerous times in an abusive relationship.

1800RESPECT can help you create a safety plan to protect yourself.

Safety planning

Safety planning means putting together a checklist of actions you can take and people you can reach out to if you feel unsafe or need to leave quickly.

Example of a safety plan



Plan and practise the quickest way to leave your home.



If possible, keep a mobile phone and charger near you.



Find a trusted person you can reach 24/7 if you need to leave quickly.



Consider choosing a code word to prevent the other person from discovering your plan to leave.



Give someone you trust keys or access to your home and any copies of important documentation.



Have a pre-packed escape bag with a phone, keys, money, IDs, documents, and any required medication.

1800RESPECT

NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC
FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE



Call 1800 737 732



Text 0458 737 732



Chat online at 1800respect.org.au

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 Lifeline

When to seek support

It's important to seek help if:

- ✓ You feel scared, controlled, or unsafe in your relationship.
- ✓ You're avoiding people or activities to hide what's happening.
- ✓ You feel trapped or unsure how to leave.
- ✓ Your partner's behaviour is making you question your memory or reality.
- ✓ You're being pressured into things you don't want to do.
- ✓ You're worried about your safety or your children's safety.

Leaving an abusive relationship is a brave step towards a safer future.

Emergency housing and financial support is available.

Support is available

Understanding and escaping DFV isn't something you have to do on your own.

Head to our **Support Toolkit** to learn more about DFV and the national and local support services that can help.

The Support Toolkit also offers information on a wide range of mental health and wellbeing topics you can explore at your own pace, whenever you need.

Visit lifeline.org.au/dfv/services or scan the QR code to get started.

If you're feeling overwhelmed right now, Lifeline is here to support you.

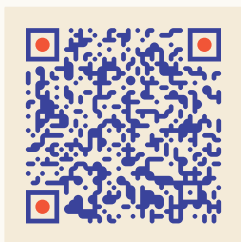
You can reach us 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

☎ Call 13 11 14

✉ Text 0477 131 114

💬 Chat online at lifeline.org.au/crisis-chat

If your life is in danger, please call 000.



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