

# What is Family Violence?

**Family violence is when someone who has a close personal relationship with you harms you, controls you or makes you feel afraid. The violence may not always be physical, but can be emotional or psychological and create just as much harm. It is not your fault. It is the abuser who is responsible.**

- Family violence can happen to anyone in any neighbourhood or group
- Family violence hurts families, communities and individuals
- Everyone has the right to be safe and not live in fear
- There is help for you to be safe

In family violence, the abusive person could be anyone significant to you such as your current or past partner; child; brother or sister; parent; cousin; grandparent; someone you are caring for, or who cares for you; or perhaps someone you have a kinship or cultural duty towards. Domestic violence, child abuse, parent abuse and elder abuse are all part of family violence.

Physical harm, rape or sexual abuse, damaging property, harming pets, stalking and threats to injure or kill are criminal offences.

Other forms of family violence that are also damaging include:

- **Emotional and psychological abuse;** put downs and humiliation
- **Social abuse;** controlling where you go and who you see
- **Financial abuse;** unfairly controlling money
- **Threats of violence,** including threats of self harm
- **Controlling your spiritual or cultural choices**
- **Blaming you for not fixing family and community problems**

## What are the effects of family violence?

Abuse in families has serious consequences.

### For the family:

- Children showing signs of distress, anger or self-blame.
- Break down in family functioning.
- Household conflict.
- Frequently moving to avoid the abuser.
- Child Protection or Police involvement.

### For the wider community:

- Children growing up without learning about positive, respectful relationships.
- Community conflict.
- Abusers going to prison.
- Feelings of collective shame and despair.
- Higher rates of drug and alcohol use and mental health problems.

### For the victim:

- Fear, depression, shame and anger.
- Use of drugs or alcohol to block out the pain.
- Physical health problems.
- Suicidal thoughts.
- Injury or death.

If you or someone you know is experiencing any of these abuses, or if you recognise that you are harming, frightening or controlling someone close to you...

**GET HELP IMMEDIATELY.**

## What can I do?

Act now to get help. Remember, the violence is not your fault and you don't have to put up with it. Everyone has the right to respectful, loving family relationships and no one should live in fear:

- **Talk to someone who is safe – do not try coping alone**
- **Make contact with a family and domestic violence support service**
- **Make a safety plan in case you have to escape quickly**
- **See a doctor if you have been injured or you feel anxious or depressed**
- **Get free legal advice from Legal Aid**
- **Seek compensation via your State Victims of Crime Service**
- **For immediate help if you are in danger, call the police on 000**

If someone you know is experiencing family violence listen to them, show them your support and help them contact a family violence service.



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## Find out more

Call Lifeline – **13 11 14** if you need to speak to someone about family violence or the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault helpline 24hrs a day on **1800 200 526**.

Visit **[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)** to find a range of self-help resources and information.