

WOMEN AND THE IMPACTS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE.

Hume Region Integrated Family Violence Services work to enhance the capacity of organisations, service providers and the community. Its aim is to prevent violence against women and children and to work with men to ensure a violence free future.

The biggest risk factor for becoming a victim of family violence is being a woman.¹

Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure. For women experiencing family violence this right has been violated. Any woman can experience family violence, regardless of their race, ethnicity, age, ability, socio-economic status or geographical location.² However, structural circumstances, including poverty, isolation and disadvantage caused by limited access to resources and services, mean that some women are at greater risk of harm. This is due to the fact that they have fewer opportunities to escape violence. Family violence represents a complex reality in the lives of women experiencing abuse. They are forced to consider their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their children. Women must also negotiate a variety of emotional, psychological, financial and social factors amid the violence. Rather than ask, 'Why doesn't she leave the relationship?' we should ask, 'Why doesn't he stop the violence?' Responsibility must always remain with the person who is choosing to be violent, not the person who is subjected to the violence.



WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP KEEP YOURSELF SAFE

If you are experiencing family violence or hurting the people you care about, help and support is available.

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service:
1800 015 188

Centre Against Sexual Assault:
1800 806 292

Kids Help Line:
1800 551 800

Women's Legal Service Victoria:
1800 133 302

Men's Referral Service:
1800 065 973

Centrelink Crisis Payment:
132 850

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service:
1800 105 303

WIRE:
1300 134 130

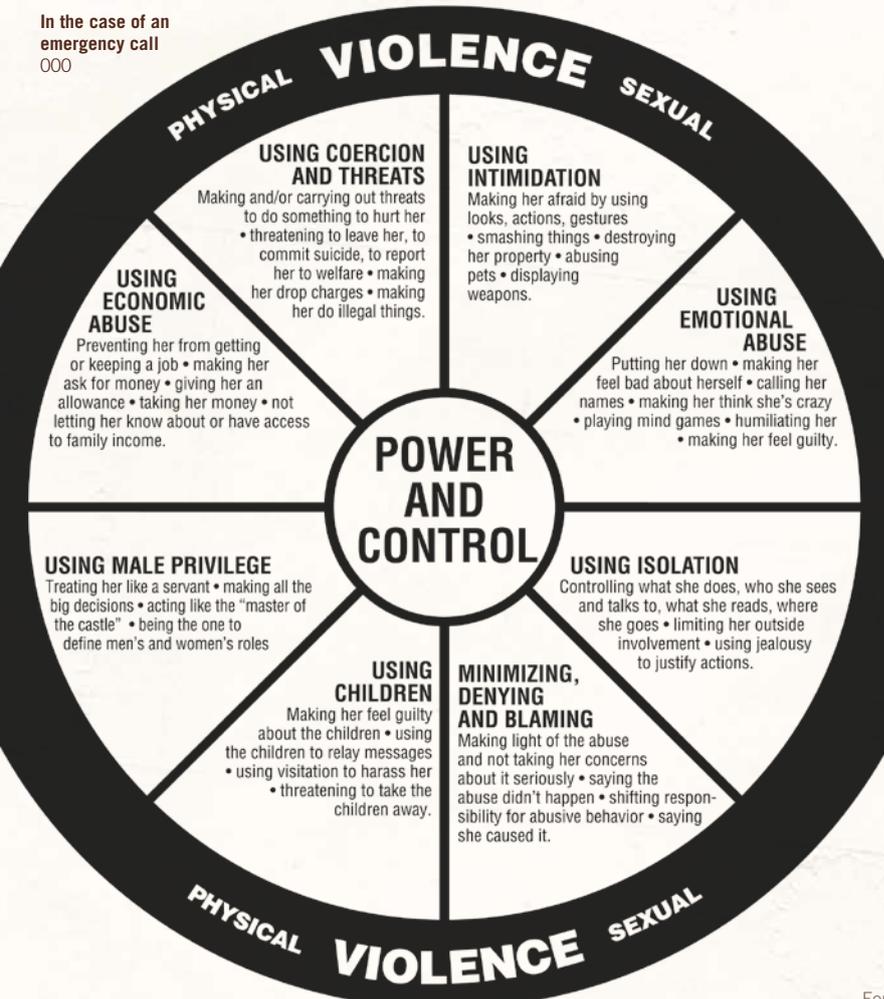
In the case of an emergency call
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Women living with violence often develop coping strategies they use to protect themselves. It is important that you identify and acknowledge your strengths and what you already do to keep yourself safe. Many women living with violence have a safety plan around what they will do if they feel threatened. If you don't have a plan, here are some things to think about.

MAKE A SAFETY PLAN

If you are living with violence, safety is a key priority. The period soon after leaving a violent partner can be a dangerous time. So too can staying with an abusive partner. Making a safety plan can be helpful as it allows you to think through how to best protect yourself. Your plan may include who you will call or where you will go if you feel threatened. If you can, have money, phone numbers and important documents accessible for if you have to leave in a hurry. You may consider having a bag packed with items such as clothing, medication, toiletries, children's toys and a spare set of keys. If you have children it is important that they know what to do in an emergency.

The Power and Control Wheel illustrates the types of behaviours a violent person may use.³



TALK TO SOMEONE

Women living with violence can feel embarrassed and ashamed. While it may be difficult to talk about, it is important for your safety that you tell a trusted friend, relative or neighbour about your situation. When you feel ready you could also speak to a domestic violence worker or a healthcare professional. They can offer you confidential support, assist with safety planning, and inform you about the services available to you and your children.

TELL THE POLICE

The police must investigate family violence incidents and act to protect you and your children. The police can help you get an intervention order which will limit the violent person's access to you. It can also be useful to talk to someone from a Community Legal Service or Legal Aid. They can provide free information about pressing criminal charges, separation, divorce, property settlement and concerns involving your children, such as child support payments and custody arrangements.

WHERE YOU CAN GO FOR HELP AND SUPPORT

If you have been affected by violence there are support services available to you. Counselling can offer you a safe and confidential place to talk and consider your options for the future.

Mitchell Community Health
offers counselling for women affected by family violence:
1300 773 352

FamilyCare
provides family counselling:
03 5735 4600

Centre Against Sexual Assault
provides crisis counselling and support for women affected by sexual assault:
1800 806 292

Pathways
offers support for homeless people or people at risk of becoming homeless:
03 5735 2055

Rural Housing Network
provides short term and medium term accommodation:
03 5735 2000

INTEGRATED FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES
Women, men and children
Hume Region



For more information about these fact sheets go to www.familyviolenceservices.com.au

1 The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their children (2009) Time for Action: The National Council's plan for Australia to Reduce Violence

2 Ibid against Women and their children, 2009-2021, The Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.

3 The Power and Control Wheel (2009) Domestic Violence Intervention Programs, Duluth, available at www.theduluthmodel.org