

# **Women's Safety Planning**







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This booklet is designed as a guide only to legal and support services available to women in a violent or abusive relationship. It is not a substitute for legal advice.

Please be aware that all information is correct at time of printing, however from time to time changes in policy, legislation and contact details may occur. We encourage you to check that information is current at the time of your reading.

The Authors disclaim any liability for any loss or damage arising from the contents.

Women's Activities and Self Help House  
Street Address: Lot 5 Kelly Close, Mt Druitt 2770  
Postal Address: PO Box 551, Mt Druitt 2770  
Phone: 9677 1962  
Fax: 9677 1046  
Email: [admin@washhouse.org.au](mailto:admin@washhouse.org.au)  
Web: [www.washhouse.org.au](http://www.washhouse.org.au)



An Australian Government Initiative

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# Introduction

## It's not Your Fault



*Victims of domestic violence can be anyone - your sister, your mother, your best friend, your aunt, your neighbour, your co-worker.....*

Knowing the facts about relationship abuse and domestic violence and being aware of the resources available to help, can assist you in making a clear choice about the best thing to do in your particular circumstance.

If your partner is abusing you, you may feel confused, afraid, angry and/or trapped. All of these emotions are normal responses to abuse. You may also blame yourself for what is happening. What you need to know is that no matter what others might say, you are never responsible for your partner's abusive actions. Abuse is not caused by alcohol or drugs, stress, anger or provocation. It is always a choice by the abuser to be that way.

### **It is not your fault.**

The reality is that there are many barriers to finding safety from an abusive relationship and it's not a case of being able to just leave. Leaving can sometimes be dangerous for you and/or the children. In addition, there are many ways in which an abusive partner can make it difficult for you to leave the relationship. Many women are financially vulnerable and feel that they cannot maintain a commitment to their children's wellbeing if they leave. As you develop a better understanding of these issues, you will be better assisted to work your way out of an abusive relationship.

Learning how to develop a personal safety plan for yourself and your children should you need to leave your home suddenly, as well as where you can go safely for help is both practical and wise in these situations. The tips in this booklet include how to prepare to leave, and how to set yourself up independently, away from your abusive partner, both temporarily and permanently. There are also safety tips for how to better protect yourself prior to or during a physical attack and information on legal and community supports that are available to you.

*Domestic Violence is against the law; it is a violation of your basic human rights*

# Overview of Domestic Violence

## What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, between people in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence may also include abuse that is emotional/psychological or behaviour that is intimidating. Although both men and women can be victims of domestic violence, the overwhelming majority of this violence involves men abusing women.

Intimate relationships include those between the opposite sex and same sex partners. These relationships can include current and former partners, people living in de-facto relationships and married couples.

The violence itself can take many forms, including a physical attack, unwanted sexual force, financial control, emotional and psychological abuse. It may happen only once in a while or it may happen all of the time.

Although each situation is different, there are common warning signs which may include:

- Calling you names or putting you down
- Keeping you away from family or friends
- Withholding money from you
- Denying you access to medical treatment or other services
- Threats and psychological abuse directed towards you, the children or your pets
- Anger and intimidation directed at you
- Actual or threatened physical harm
- Emotionally blackmailing and/or guilt tripping you
- Sexual assault/or sexual force that is unwanted

Knowing these signs is an important part of preventing the violence and stopping it from continuing.

### ***Abusive relationships include:***

Inequality  
Competition  
Manipulation  
Hostility  
Control  
Put Downs

### ***Healthy relationships include:***

Equality  
Partnership/Co-operation  
Honesty  
Good Will/Peaceful Communication  
Intimacy/Closeness  
Support (emotional, physical, financial)

## **Impact on women**

Women in domestic violence relationships are often afraid to take a stand about the violence or the ongoing abuse, as it can be unsafe for them to do so. They are impacted emotionally, physically, financially and sometimes spiritually. As a consequence of these relationships many women suffer from self-doubt, loss of confidence and have feelings of regret when they think about what's going on. They do not want to break up their family and they are torn because a person they once loved (or love) is now behaving very differently.

Making a decision to end the abuse is tough however many women do it and move forward into lives that are safer, happier and more satisfying for themselves and their children.

## **Impact on children**

Children are impacted by abuse in a variety of ways.

Sometimes the stress of the abuse causes:

- A delay in the ability to learn
- Acting out behaviours sometimes called "bad" behaviour
- Issues such as ADD, ADHD
- Health problems such as chronic colds or rashes
- Depression, anxiety, nightmares, bedwetting and other states of distress
- Desire to be perfect
- Drug or alcohol use
- Not wanting to go to school

Your child may be trying to keep you or their brothers and sisters safe or they may be trying to stop the abuse from happening again. Research has shown that in these situations the greatest protective resource your child can have is the positive relationship they have with you. When they know they can rely on you they are better able to manage difficult situations.

There are many ways you are already supporting your children to feel safe. It is important for you to keep yourself safe so that you can continue to look after them. It is also important to remember that your children have a legal right to live in a home which is free of violence and abuse. The best way for you to support your children is to get support for yourself.

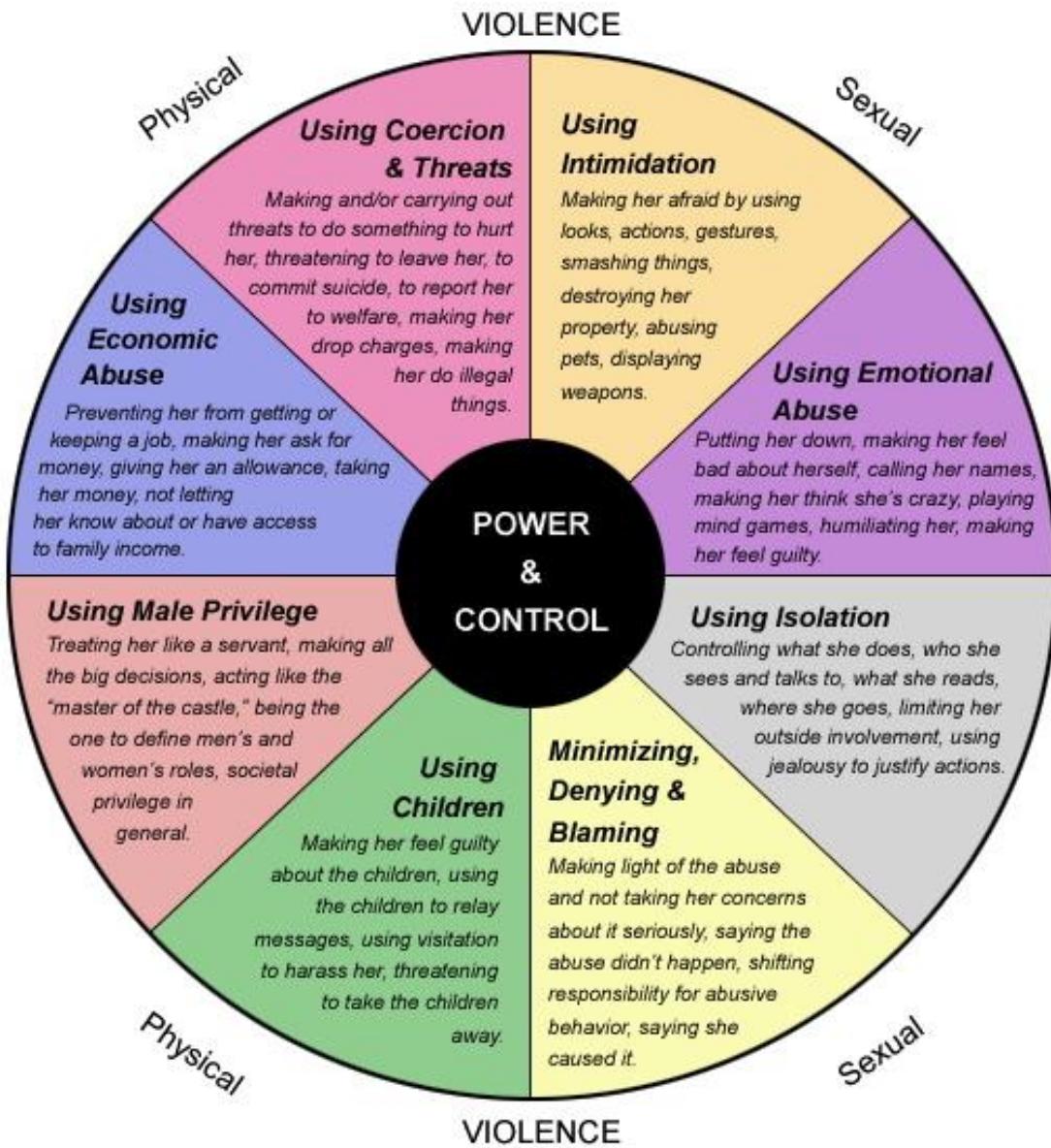
## ***Making a decision to end the abuse***

Making a decision to end an abusive relationship can be one of the hardest things you will ever do. It's a very difficult thing to finally decide that enough is enough, that you and the children deserve a better life and where you have the courage and determination to make the changes necessary to put a stop to the abuse.

This decision requires great honesty and courage and this can be very difficult when your life has been full of chaos, distress and emotional pain from an abusive relationship. When you make this decision, there are support systems available to you, from people who are trained and skilled in this area. This support is free and confidential. It can involve just you or you and your partner - if he is willing to take responsibility for his behaviour.

## ***How an abusive person uses power and control to dominate***

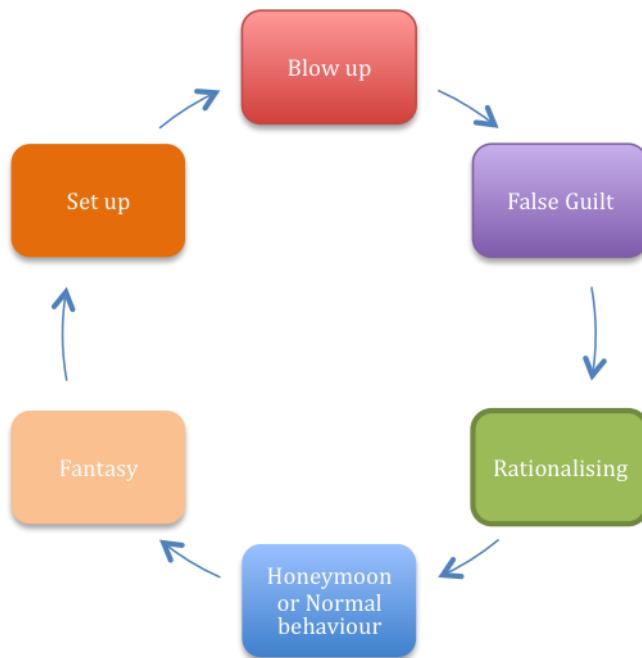
If you recognise any of the situations below in your current relationship then you are in an unhealthy, unbalanced relationship that has the potential to become dangerous and unsafe for you and your children.



## ABUSE IN RELATIONSHIPS

All intimate relationships are different as each person in a relationship is an individual. However in relationships where a partner is abusive and controlling, there are some typical patterns of behaviour that are easy to recognise once you know them.

Studies have shown there is a cycle of abuse found in many abusive relationships which contain many of the stages illustrated below. If you recognise this pattern in your relationship, you should first understand that you are not to blame. This is a pattern of behaviour which is common in people who are trying to gain control of others.



### *What is the 'Cycle of Violence'?*

The 'Cycle of Violence' consists of a set of behaviours and abusive tactics used to control an intimate partner, ex-partner, family member and their children. The various phases, outlined below, can be used in various combinations and to varying levels of intensity, with some phases overlapping.

#### *Blow up*

When the time and circumstances are right, the explosive attack begins. This is a display of control over the partner and may include extreme abuse, aggression, damage to property and violence.

#### *False Guilt*

After the explosion, false guilt is displayed. These are not normal feelings displayed after hurting someone but guilt over the possibility of being found out. The abusive person may feel ashamed of what happened or fear the consequences. The abuser will often promise that it will not happen again and may blame other factors or substance abuse e.g. alcohol for the behaviour.

#### *Rationalisation*

Here the abuser attempts to justify and minimise their actions. They may blame the victim for provoking the behaviour, saying she made him do it due to something she did or said. The abuser may demonstrate false remorse and may use threats of self-harm to get sympathy.

### **Honeymoon/Normal Behaviour**

Things have calmed down and returned to the courting phase. The abusive partner may show increased caring, attention and romantic feeling (previous manipulative practices) or acts as if nothing happened at all. This gives the victim hope it will never happen again and at this point many women, because of their forgiving nature and goodwill, give the violent partner another chance to prove that he really is a good guy.

### **Fantasy**

Here the abuser fantasises about past and future abuse of the victim. These fantasies fuel the abusers anger to help them move onto the next stage. **They may start an argument to prove to themselves they are right about their fantasies. He may have jealous fantasies or falsely accuse the victim of something she has not done.**

### **Set-up**

It is now that increasing level of control and threats begin, tension builds up as well as harassment and arguments. This is how the abuser creates a situation of control, in which he feels there is no choice but to act in an abusive way and he feels this can be justified. This is where the inevitable violent explosion occurs again and the cycle repeats itself.

**The "Cycle of Violence' theory was developed following research by Dr Lenore Walker in 1979.**

**Knowing these facts about relationship abuse and the cycle of violence can help you make informed decisions about what is best for you in these circumstances. When you realise you are not going crazy and the abuser is the one responsible for the violent behaviour a lot of the confusion around making a decision to leave is removed.**

## **Where to get help**

### **WASH House**

**9677 1962**

You can arrange an appointment to talk to our counsellor about your situation. This is a confidential and free service. Here you can get resources, information and support as you work through the process of making the positive changes you want for your life.

### **Domestic Violence Crisis Line**

**1800 65 64 63**

A 24 hour service line which can provide advice on vacancies in refuges, as well as referrals, counselling and information.

### **Mt Druitt Family Violence Service**

**9677 9628**

Crisis support and medium term case management for anyone affected by domestic and family violence. Aboriginal and Pacific communities, caseworkers are available.

### **Mt Druitt Community Health Centre**

**9881 1200**

Counselling service available to children, families and individuals

### **Blacktown Community Health Centre**

**9881 8700**

Counselling service available to children, families and individuals

# Decision Map

Many women in abusive relationships face one of the following difficult decisions. The most important part of any decision you make is that you and your children are safe in the short term and in the long term.

When deciding what to do, it may be helpful for you to seek the support of a domestic violence support service. These services will help you make a safety plan for yourself and your children. By developing a safety plan that will aim to protect you in a variety of different situations, you will have the opportunity to increase your confidence and allow you to regain a sense of control



# What is an AVO?

If you are a person in need of protection because your partner or ex-partner is violent, abusive or threatening towards you and/or your children, then an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) may assist in protecting you from this person's behaviour.

An Apprehended Domestic Violence Order is a court order made by a magistrate under the NSW *Crimes Act 1900*. Its purpose is to protect you (and your children) from family violence.

The AVO protects you by ordering the abusive person not to do specific things. All AVOs will include Mandatory Orders:

1. a) The defendant must not assault, molest, harass, threaten or otherwise interfere with the protected person(s) or a person with whom the protected person(s) has/have a domestic relationship.
- b) The defendant must not engage in any other conduct that intimidates the protected person(s) or a person with whom the protected person(s) has/have a domestic relationship.
- c) The defendant must not stalk the protected person(s) or a person with whom the protected person(s) has/have a domestic relationship.

There are additional orders that can be made also including:

- 2. The defendant must not reside at the premises at which the protected person(s) may from time to time reside.
- 3. The defendant must not enter the premises at which the protected person(s) may from time to time reside or work.
- 4. The defendant must not go within .....of the premises at which the protected person may from time to time reside or work or other specified premises:
- 5. The defendant must not approach or contact the protected person(s) by any means whatsoever, except through the defendant's legal representative or as agreed in writing or as permitted by an order or directions under the Family Law Act 1975, for the purpose of counselling, conciliation, or mediation.
- 6. The defendant must not approach or contact the protected person(s) by any means whatsoever, except through the defendant's legal representative or as authorised by a parenting order under the Family Law Act 1975 unless the parenting order has been varied, suspended or discharged under Section 68R of the Family Law Act 1975.
- 7. The defendant must not approach or contact the protected person(s) by any means whatsoever, except through the defendant's legal representative.
- 8. The defendant must surrender all firearms and related licences to Police.

- 9. The defendant must not approach the school or other premises at which the protected person(s) may from time to time attend for the purposes of education or child care or other specified premises:
  - 10. The defendant must not approach the protected person(s) or any such premises or place at which the protected person(s) from time to time reside or work within twelve (12) hours of consuming intoxicating liquor or illicit drugs.
- 11. The defendant must not destroy or deliberately damage or interfere with the property of the protected person(s)

The abusive person is called the 'defendant' and you and/or your children may be listed as 'protected persons' on the AVO. The defendant must obey the Orders made by the Court.

There are two types of AVOs.

### ***Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders or ADVOs***

An Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) is made where the people involved are related or have had a domestic or intimate relationship.

### ***Apprehended Personal Violence Orders or APVOs.***

An Apprehended Personal Violence Order or APVO is made where the people involved are not related and do not have any domestic or intimate relationship, for example, they are neighbours.

## **HOW CAN I GET AN AVO?**

There are two ways to get an AVO.

### ***Police***

The police can apply to the court to get an AVO for you. This usually happens if there has been an incident and the police have charged the abusive person at the time of the incident. They do this on your behalf to protect you.

If the police have applied for an Apprehended Violence Order on your behalf (Police Applications), you do not need a lawyer as the Police Prosecutor will present the matter in court for you.

### ***Private Application***

If you decide you want to make a Private Application, you can go to a Local Court and explain to the Chamber Registrar why you want an Order. The Chamber Registrar legally must allow you to make an Application for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order.

The application will then go before the court. It is a good idea to get a lawyer to represent you or you can represent yourself if you want to.

Legal aid is available in Apprehended Violence Order matters and this is a free service.

There is a Domestic Violence Duty Solicitor available in a number of Local Courts to represent Private Applicants for Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders. They will charge you if you do not have legal aid however if you do have legal aid then they are free.

These Duty Solicitors talk to the Magistrate in the court room about the case and ask the Magistrate to put the AVO in place for your protection. You will need to advise the solicitor of what you want and they negotiate this with the Magistrate for you if you do not represent yourself.

There is also the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, which is a free service available at some courts. They can help you apply for legal aid, sit with you while you wait and go into the court with you as a support person when the magistrate hears your case.

### ***Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service***

**(02) 8745 6999 or 1800 810 784**

If you are just thinking about what to do and want some information about Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) and other services -they can help you.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services can't provide legal advice. If you need legal advice, you should see a lawyer or contact Law Access NSW for a referral to a legal service in your area.

**Law Access NSW**

**1300 888 529**

### ***You can ask a Magistrate for an Exclusion Order as part of an AVO.***

An exclusion order is a condition of the AVO that stops the abusive person from staying at or entering the family home, regardless of their legal interest in the property.

Having an exclusion order allows you to end a situation of domestic violence, remain in your home and have the violent person not be allowed to return to the home.

### ***Do I have to go to the court for the hearing?***

Yes you will, as the magistrate may want to talk to you and ask questions about the events. This is not because the magistrate thinks you are wrong rather it is to get all the details from both people so the best decision can be made. Being in court gives you the opportunity to tell your story and to hear what the other person is saying about what happened.

### ***Can my children be protected too?***

Yes they can. If the police hold concerns for your safety they must include the children in an application.

### ***If my ex wants to see the children and I have an AVO can he do that?***

The important thing is the children's safety. If the children will be safe when they visit with him then it is best to sort out an agreement between you that will work. This can be done through the Family Law Court and is called a Parenting Plan.

If you don't agree with him seeing the children, then get legal advice. Contact your local Family Relationship Centre for more information (call 1800 050 321 for the number of your local service)

## ***Is an AVO a criminal conviction?***

The ADVO itself does not mean the abusive person has a criminal conviction. If the person has been violent towards you, they may be charged a criminal offence for this action.

Granting an ADVO does not mean the abusive person will have a criminal record or that they will go to gaol. However, if they breach the order, this is a crime and the will be charged with this offence. If this happens, they may end up with a criminal record or go to gaol.

*This information was sourced from the Publications Unit of Legal Aid NSW. This information is also available online at:  
[www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/pubsonline](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/pubsonline)*

## **POLICE SUPPORT**

Family violence and domestic violence are behaviours that are against the law and you can take action to stop it.

### **HOW THE POLICE CAN HELP?**

***If there is family violence call the police on '000'.***

The police have the power to:

- *Arrest the offender*
- *Search for and remove weapons – if you tell them the offender has a gun they must remove it*
- *Charge the offender with a criminal offence*
- *Apply for an apprehended domestic violence order on your behalf. This will protect you from the violent person.*

# Exclusion Orders

## What is an exclusion order?

An exclusion order is one of the conditions which may be applied for in an application for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO). An exclusion order prohibits the violent person from living in the home of the protected person. This can include the home where both parties are, or have been living. An exclusion order allows you to end a situation of domestic violence, remain in your home and have the violent person not be allowed to return to the home.

## Is this something for me?

Before applying for an exclusion order, there are a number of questions you should be asking yourself.

- Would you prefer to stay at home and have the violent person leave?
- Will you feel safe and be safe if you stay at home?
- Will you be fearful because your partner knows where you are living?
- Do you have children and would they be better off remaining at home with you?
- Can you afford to pay the housing costs?

## How do I get an exclusion order?

A Magistrate can only make an exclusion order if it is requested in the application for an ADVO.

It's important to discuss this option with a lawyer, court support worker or police officer when applying for an ADVO. If you get an exclusion order, please talk with a court support worker and police officer about what else you might need to feel safe and supported.

The police can also apply for an exclusion order as part of a Telephone Interim Order (TIO) which they can apply for at any time, following a violent incident. A TIO provides you with immediate protection until the matter can go before the court.

Remember to report any breaches of the exclusion order to the police.

## **What's relevant to the Court in making an exclusion order?**

The Court considers a number of things in deciding whether or not to make an exclusion order. These are:

- The safety and protection of the protected person and any children living at home, if such an order is not made
- Any hardship that may be caused by making or not making the order, particularly to the protected person and any children
- The accommodation needs of all relevant parties, particularly the protected person and any children, and
- Any other relevant matters

## **Who can I contact for help?**

**Police/Ambulance 000**

**Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463**

**Sydney Advice Line: (02) 8745 6999**

**DoCS Helpline**

**132 111 (TTY 1800 212 936)**

**Women's Legal Resource Centre**

**(02) 9749 5533.**

**Indigenous Women's Contact Line**

**1800 639 784**

**Financial Assistance Call Centrelink on 13 2850, or visit your local Centrelink Customer Service Centre**

**Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre 1800 686 587 or (02) 9569 3847**

# Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services

## WHO THEY ARE

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services are locally-based, independent services for women and children seeking help and information about how to get protection from the court in situations of domestic violence. Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services are funded by Legal Aid NSW and are managed by local agencies.

If you are just thinking about what to do and want some information about Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) and other services they can help you.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services can't provide legal advice. If you need legal advice, you should see a lawyer or contact Law Access NSW for a referral to a legal service in your area:

**1300 888 529**

**Penrith/Mt Druitt**

**4731 5098**

**Blacktown/ Hawkesbury**

**9671 9126**

**Mt Druitt Community Legal Centre**

**9675 2009**

### Before court

If you have a domestic violence matter which is going to court and you want to know what will happen, they can provide you with information and other assistance before you go to court.

### At court

They will make sure you have a safe place to sit at court, give you information to help you understand what is happening and work with you to get an order that is best for your situation. Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services will also keep you informed about the progress of your matter through the court, including future dates when you need to attend court.

### After court

After court, they can refer you to other services that can help you with safe housing, income support, children's needs, family law and counselling. They can also provide you with information about what to do if the abuse continues.

### Special help

Some Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services have specialist workers to help Aboriginal women, or women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## ***Do I need to go to court?***

Yes. It is important for you to go to court to get information about what is happening in your case. It is important that the court has up-to-date information about your situation and what you want and whether anything has changed since your application was made.

## ***I want to live with my partner. Can the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service help me?***

Yes. You can still apply for an order which protects you but which allows you to live with your partner. There are many different conditions which can be included in an order so that it is suited to your situation. The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service will help you apply for conditions that meet your needs, but still give you protection from violence and abuse.

If you already have an order but your situation has changed, you should speak to the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service about changing your AVO.

## ***What if I want to withdraw the application for an AVO?***

Although you might feel that things have settled down, it is best to seek advice before you consider withdrawing your application. Remember, an AVO does not mean the abusive person has a criminal charge. It is about protecting you from future violence and abusive behaviour. If you have children, it will protect them as well. The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service can provide you with information and discuss any concerns you have about withdrawing your application for an AVO.

If the police have applied for the order, you may not be able to withdraw the application, particularly where children are involved, or where police believe an offence has been committed or is likely to be committed. The Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service will be able to explain this further.

## ***What if the defendant breaches one of the conditions of the AVO?***

A breach of an AVO is a criminal offence. You should report any breach of the AVO to the police by calling **000**.

The police will investigate the matter and decide whether or not to charge the defendant for committing the offence.

## **AFTER COURT**

Some important things to remember:

- In any emergency, ring the police on **000**.
- Make sure you obtain your copy of the AVO from the court office before you leave the courthouse.
- Make several copies of the court orders and always have a copy with you.
- If your partner or ex-partner breaches the order, call 000 immediately.
- Call your local Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service if you need any further information or assistance.
- Call Law Access NSW for legal information and advice on **1300 888 529**.

**For more information on AVOs or to find your nearest Service, call Law Access NSW on 1300 888 529 or visit [www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au](http://www.lawaccess.nsw.gov.au)**

## LEGAL TERMS

### ***Chamber Registrar***

The Chamber Registrar works at the Local Court and can help prepare AVO applications for people who wish to make a private application.

### ***Consent***

Sometimes the defendant will agree to an AVO being made against him/her. In this case, the matter does not have to go to a hearing at a later date. The defendant may consent without admission which means that he/she agrees to the order but doesn't necessarily agree to the facts in the AVO application.

### ***Court list***

This is the list of cases being heard by the court each day. Some courts have an AVO list day so that AVO matters are heard on the same day each week.

### ***Cross-application***

Sometimes a defendant in an AVO matter will apply for an AVO against the protected person. If this happens to you, contact your local Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service straight away or seek legal advice. Your local Service will be able to assist you to obtain legal representation.

### ***Defendant***

The person against whom you have an order.

### ***Final order***

The order made at the end of the court proceedings. It lasts as long as the court thinks you need it and you do not have to return to court unless you need to change the conditions on the order or to extend it.

### ***Interim order***

An order that lasts until the next court date.

### ***Magistrate***

Magistrates decide whether or not to grant an AVO, which conditions should be included and for how long. In court they are referred to as 'Your Honour'.

### ***Mention***

This is the occasion when your case or matter is brought before the court. If the defendant does not consent to the AVO, it will go to a hearing on another day. You should attend court on every mention date (unless you are told you don't have to).

### ***Police prosecutor***

Police prosecutors present information to the court on behalf of police, just as lawyers do on behalf of private applicants.

## **Private applications**

These are applications for AVOs made by the person in need of protection. A lawyer may apply on the person's behalf. You may apply for Legal Aid representation so you have a lawyer to represent you at court. You need to meet the Legal Aid means test for this to occur.

## **Protected person**

The person for whom the order is sought or made (you).

## **Provisional interim order (PIO)**

A temporary order obtained by police in an emergency until your court date.

## **MORE INFORMATION AND HELP**

**Law Access NSW 1300 888 529**

**Women's Legal Service Domestic Violence Advice Line**

**Within Sydney (02) 8745 6999 Outside Sydney**

**(Rural Free Call Line) 1800 810 784 TTY 1800 626 267**

**Domestic Violence Advice Lines are open 9.30am - 12.30pm and 1.30pm -4.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Advice lines do not operate on a Wednesday.**

**Department of Community Services Domestic Violence Line (24 hours, 7 days) 1800 656 463 TTY 1800 671 442**

**Police Call Triple Zero (000) TTY 106**

**Translating & Interpreting Service 131 450**

*This information was sourced from the Publications Unit of Legal Aid NSW. This information is also available online at: [www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/pubsonline](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/pubsonline)*

# Safety During An Explosive Incident

## ***Go to an area that has an exit***

If an argument seems unavoidable, try to ensure you are in a room or area that has access to an exit. Avoid the bathroom (near hard surfaces), kitchen (knives) or anywhere a weapon can be used.

## ***Stay in a room with a phone***

Call **000**, a friend or a neighbour, if possible. Let them know if there are weapons in the home.

## ***Know your escape route***

Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevators, or stairs would be safe and easy to access. Visualise your escape route beforehand, then if anything happens you will quickly know what to do and where to go to get to safety.

## ***Have a packed bag ready***

Keep it hidden in a handy place in order to leave quickly, or leave the bag elsewhere if your abuser searches your home.

## ***Tell a trusted neighbour***

Identify a neighbour you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.

## ***Devise a code word or signal***

Make up a code word to use with your children, family, friends, and neighbours when you need the police. Tell them what you want them to do when you use the word, such as call the police or knock on the front door.

## ***Know where you're going***

Decide and plan where you will go if you have to leave the home (even if you don't think you need to). Do this by setting it up in advance with your support person - it may be your sister or mother or a friends place. Make your plan with them before anything happens.

## ***Trust your judgement***

Consider anything that you feel will keep you safe and give you time to figure out what to do next. If the situation is very dangerous, use your own instincts and judgement to keep yourself safe. Remember it is better to look after your own safety first as you may be in more danger if you stay and try to resolve the issue or pacify the violent person. This is not likely to be successful if the person is in a violent rage. So don't risk trying to work it through if this has continually failed in the past.

# EMOTIONAL SAFETY AFTER A VIOLENT INCIDENT

## ***Speak to friends***

Call them and discuss what happened. It's positive to talk about things rather than deny and hide what has happened. Don't think you are being a burden to them by wanting to talk, they will understand. You'll be surprised by how supportive the right friends or family members can be in challenging times.

## ***Call your support worker***

If things are particularly rocky for you call the family violence service that is supporting you and ask for specific support and advice from your worker.

## ***Write things down***

There will be many things to organise if you have court and other services to see, so write things down or ask friends or your worker to remind you. It's very easy to forget things when you are under such stress.

## ***Rely on your safety plan***

Put all the things in your safety plan into place as soon as possible. This will boost your confidence and you will know you are secure in the house.

Put all the things in the children's safety plan into place. This will help them to feel safe and they will get the message that the violence will now stop.

## ***Have a friend stay for awhile***

Have a friend, neighbour or relative stay in the house with you if this feels right for you, just until life gets back to normal.

## ***Keep to your daily routine***

As much as possible, try to keep to your normal routine with the children. This will make them feel more secure and you will feel good because you are doing the daily things that make your family strong and happy.

## ***Talk to a counsellor***

Talk to a counsellor as soon after the incident as possible. The WASH House has a counsellor or staff who you can see very quickly if necessary.

Lifeline counsellors are available 24 hrs a day. There is no cost and you can call from home at any time

**13 11 14**

## ***Do the things that make you feel good***

Make yourself a cup of tea and calm yourself down when you notice the wheels are beginning to spin. If you find yourself being judgmental of yourself, the children or others, and your head is going a million miles an hour, stop for a moment and just breathe. Remind yourself that you are dealing with a really difficult situation, you are taking action to make things better and you are coping as best you can considering the circumstances.

Listen to your favourite music or cook something special for yourself and the children. At these times it's important to distract yourself from the old damaging thoughts.

Some women like to clean the house when they feel anxious as this gives them a feeling of order. Others can't concentrate on anything and like to watch TV or eat chocolate to calm themselves. Watching funny DVDs, or listening to the radio can help – choose something that feels right for you.

It really doesn't matter how you make yourself feel good, just know things will change with time and you will not feel this way forever. By being gentle and accepting of yourself at this time, you'll find you will heal quicker.

## ***Re-establishing emotional balance***

Don't try and sort it all out yourself, give yourself time as you will go through a range of feelings after the incident and during the separation from your ex-partner. Remember you were together for a period of time and now life is changing and good changes take their own time.

## ***Friendship & support***

Many women find that after it's all over they have very few friends or support systems left. Isolation from others was a way the ex-partner was able to keep control of them. Now that you have your independence back, reach out and join with others again. Even though you may feel wounded and shy, people love to support others when they can, so just ask if you can join in.

## ***Use the WASH House as a resource***

The WASH House has ongoing women's groups and from time to time outings that are cost free and fun. You can meet new friends here and plug into a great new support system when you are ready.

Most areas will have community and neighbourhood centres or a women's health centre that also offer free or low cost activities.

# SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE

## ***Have a safe place to stay***

Make sure it is a place that can protect you and your children or grandchildren.

## ***Call a domestic violence support service***

Find out what services and refuges are available as options if you need them. Keep their address and phone number close at hand at all times.

The WASH House and other local services have a small contact card you can use which has lots of helpful numbers for local services. Ask for it next time you are at the WASH.

## ***Find someone you trust***

Leave money, extra keys, copies of important documents and clothing with someone you trust in advance, so you can leave quickly, if necessary.

Important documents might include identification papers, birth certificates, marriage certificate, passports, health and vaccination records, bankbooks, cheque books. See the Emergency Bag Checklist below for a fuller list.

## ***Open a bank account***

Put it in your name only, to increase your independence. Consider a direct deposit from your pay or Centrelink payment into the new account, if safe to do so.

## ***Have a safety plan***

Planning ahead of time will help you to be ready if you have to leave your home quickly. You may not need to use your safety plan but it's useful to be prepared and you will feel safer when you have one. You could make a safety plan yourself or ask someone from a domestic violence service to help you.

Some things to consider in your safety plan are:

- Where will you go if you need to leave quickly — to the police station, a friend or family member's place, a hotel or a refuge?
- How will you get away — car, taxi, public transport, get someone to pick you up?
- Is there someone you can trust that can help you if you need to leave quickly? If there is, let them know about your safety plan and how you would like them to help you if you call.
- How much emergency money do you need? Think about phone calls, transport and the cost of accommodation.

Think about things such as the children, where to go and what to take with you. Make sure you keep your purse and car keys close or have a copy of the key and money hidden where you can access them quickly if needed.

You will be calmer and more in control under stress if you are aware of the resources available to help you and you have planned ahead. Find out how to contact services you may need, and have an idea of how to get where you plan to go for assistance.

Study and check your plans as often as possible in order to know the safest way to leave your abuser. Tell people you trust in advance what the plans are. Visualise them in your mind and think through any other barriers that may come up that could prevent you from getting away safely.

## EMERGENCY BAG CHECKLIST

- Identification
- Driver's license
- Children's birth certificates
- Your birth certificate
- Money
- Lease, rental agreement, house deed, mortgage papers
- Bank books, credit cards
- Cheque book
- Insurance papers
- House and car keys
- Medications
- Address book
- Photos
- Medical records of all your family members
- Centrelink documents
- School records
- Passport, Visas
- Marriage Certificate, Divorce papers, family law court papers
- Jewellery
- Children's favourite toys
- Clothing

# Safety When Living on Your Own

## ***Upgrade your security system***

Change the locks on the doors and windows as soon as possible. Consider engaging a security service to install a home alarm, security sensor lighting at the front and back door, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and a peek hole in the front door.

See if you have a Staying Home Leaving Violence service in your area. The WASH House currently has a Staying Home Leaving Violence worker who you can talk to about your situation.

## ***Do a safety audit of your home***

Walk around your home and check all the entrances, including doorways, windows and anything that is not secure. Make a note of what needs to be fixed and arrange for this to occur as soon as possible. You should also check outside including the backyard and back door, fencing, gates and garbage storage areas. Can anything be done to make these areas more secure? For example, a bell on the front or back gate can alert you to anyone entering.

Other things to consider are: Is the house number visible from the street so it can be easily found by Police? Are there bushes in the yard that can be trimmed so that no-one can hide in them? Does the letter box have a lock on it so your mail cannot be stolen?

## ***Home audit checklist***

- Intruder alarm system installed
- All doors and windows secure
- Peek hole installed
- House number visible from the street
- Telephone pre-programmed for emergency numbers
- Answering machine to screen calls
- Garage can be locked
- All gates can be secured
- Power board cabinet able to be locked
- Letter box can be locked
- Outside sensor lights installed
- Telephone lines tamper proof

## ***Have a safety plan***

A safety plan will help you have a better sense of control over the situation for yourself and your children. When you have a safety plan you create options and choices for yourself that give you ways to reduce the danger. You may never have to

use your plan however having one that you update regularly with each change of circumstance will give you great peace of mind.

You could make a safety plan yourself or ask someone from a domestic violence service to help you. The important thing about a safety plan is to include all the places and times when you feel unsafe. This should include times when the children could be unsafe and those times when you are in a public space, like the supermarket, post office or the pub. It is also important that people at work know what is happening so decide who you think can support you. This person does not need to know the whole story but they need to know which calls to block and they may need to limit who is allowed to see you while you are at work.

In your safety plan you need to think and plan clearly. Ask yourself, **when do I feel unsafe? What risks have I identified? How have I been managing these risks up to now?**

For each location or situation, complete a plan with strategies you will use. Don't forget to think about:

- Home
- Work
- The shopping centre
- The kids
- Social situations (the pub, the gym etc)

**Location or situation:**

I will use the following prevention strategies...

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Use this same method for each location or situation. It does not matter if you have a lot of situations as long as you have a plan for each that will work for you.

***Change your phone number***

Screen your calls if you have an answering machine and caller ID. Save all messages which include threats or that violate any orders. Contact your local phone company about getting an unlisted number. Be selective about who you give your new contact details to and ask family and friends to keep them confidential.

***Talk to neighbours and landlords***

Inform them that the abuser no longer lives with you and that they should call the police if they see the abuser near your home.

## **Children**

Talk to the school and child care centre your children attend. Also talk to your work about the circumstances of your children. Let each of them know your situation and who has permission to pick them up or walk them home.

Teach your children or grandchildren how to call the police or someone they can trust. Teach them what to say when they make these calls.

Have a secret code word that you and your children agree on to communicate trouble and for people who are allowed to pick them up.

Teach your children to be able to say their full name and address as well as how to use the telephone to contact the police and say "someone is hurting my mummy/daddy/sister/brother".

Teach the children where to go in the house during a violent incident, how to get out of the house (backdoor or a low window) and where to go if they leave the house if you are being attacked.

## ***Get legal advice and contact domestic violence support services***

Find a solicitor, legal aid service or women's domestic violence service to explore custody, visitation and divorce provisions that protect you and the children. Discuss getting a restraining order as an option. Talk to domestic violence service agencies for support, legal advice, resources and information. These are confidential services.

Find out about support services in your local area.

<b><i>Family Violence Service</i></b>	<b>9677 9628</b>
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<b><i>WASH House</i></b>	<b>9677 1962</b>
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<b><i>Blacktown Women and Girls Health Centre</i></b>	<b>9831 2070</b>
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<b><i>Mt Druitt Community Health Centre</i></b>	<b>9881 1200</b>
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***DV crisis cards are available at these services that are small and discrete and contain important numbers you may need.***

# Separation & Children

***We have just separated and disagree about arrangements for the children. What should we do?***

## ***Family Dispute resolution***

Family Dispute Resolution is the legal term for services (such as mediation) that help couples affected by separation and divorce to sort out family disputes. It can help you to agree on a range of issues relating to property, money, and most importantly – your children.

The law requires you to take certain steps before approaching the court for a decision about issues affecting your children. Unless your case is urgent, or involves some exceptional factors, such as allegations of abuse or family violence, you must do the following before you go to court:

- Make a genuine effort to resolve the dispute through counselling or mediation; and
- Make reasonable efforts to communicate with the other party.

There are many services that help with family dispute resolution including Legal Aid NSW, the Family Relationship Advice Line and the Family Relationship Centres which provide assistance to separating families including helping parents reach agreements.

It will often be important to get some legal advice as the agreements you make about where children live and where they spend their time can also affect your property matters and child support.

## ***In cases where domestic violence has occurred***

There are special provisions in regard to making court orders in situations where children are involved with domestic violence. This includes not having to participate in family dispute resolution if it is not safe to do so.

The definition of family violence can include violence towards any family members. Therefore, any family violence whether or not directed towards the child is relevant to family law proceedings.

It is important that families provide the court information about family violence and child abuse concerns, so that the court can consider any such concerns when determining parenting orders.

The court is required to make orders that it considers proper in the circumstances, having regard to the best interests of the child above all other considerations.

Family violence and child abuse concerns are relevant to determining what orders are in the best interest of the child, as the court is to consider as a primary consideration the need to protect the child from physical or psychological harm from being subjected to, or exposed to, abuse, neglect or family violence.

It is therefore important that families discuss their family violence concerns with their legal representatives. In addition, the courts have a specific form for families to file to bring family violence and child abuse to the courts' attention. The form is the Notice of Child Abuse and Family Violence, which must be filed where parties have concerns about child abuse or family violence. Once the form is filed, the court has a maximum of eight weeks to consider what orders to make to gather additional information about the family violence or child abuse concerns and/or to protect the at-risk family members.

Families are also required to provide the court with copies of any family violence orders that apply to the family.

### **Contact these services for more advice**

The Family Relationship Advice Line (1800 050 321) is available from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Friday, and 10 am to 4 pm on Saturday or you can go online at <http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/>

Family Relationship Centres are now all over NSW including Blacktown and Penrith. The Advice Line can direct you to your nearest centre.

Legal Aid NSW Tel 1300 888 529 (or 1300 889 529 TTY) between 9 am and 5 pm, Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

### ***What sort of agreements can we make about arrangements for the children?***

You don't have to get formal orders made about the arrangements for the children, you can organise informal agreements. Many separated parents have informal agreements in place about the parenting of their children. Court orders are not involved in this arrangement.

Agreement is usually reached through negotiation between the parents with or without the help of mediation or counselling services.

Neither parent can make the other stick to an informal agreement.

### ***Parenting Plans***

A Parenting Plan is a written agreement which is signed and dated and sets out arrangements for the care of your children.

Parenting plans may not be appropriate in all circumstances, for example where there are family violence or child abuse concerns.

Parenting plans are not valid unless they are made free from duress, threat or coercion.

Parenting plans can affect later parenting orders. Families should consider seeking legal advice if entering into a parenting plan. A lawyer, family counsellor, family dispute resolution practitioner or family consultant can help you and your ex-partner make a Parenting Plan.

Parenting plans can be changed by later court orders, as well as by later parenting plans.

Further information is available from the 'Parenting Plans Guide' available on Family Relationships Online.

### ***Which courts decide parenting matters?***

There are three courts that can deal with family law matters; the Family Court, the Federal Magistrates Court and the Local Court.

In most cases you will lodge an application with the Family Court or the Federal Magistrates Court.

### ***What does the Court consider when making a parenting order?***

The Courts decide what parenting orders to make for a child on the basis of the best interests of that child. The law says that in determining the best interests of a child, the Court's primary considerations

must be: the benefit to the child of having a meaningful relationship with both of the child's parents; and, the need to protect the child from physical or psychological harm including being subjected to, or exposed to, abuse, neglect or family violence.

Additional considerations include:

- any views expressed by the child, taking into account the child's maturity;
- the child's relationship with each parent and with any other person who is important (e.g. grandparents, siblings);
- the effect on the child of any change in care arrangements, including separating siblings from each other; the capacity of each parent to provide for the needs of the child; the willingness and ability of a child's parents to encourage a close and continuing relationship with the other parent.

The parenting order that the Court makes will provide for matters such as:

- who a child will live with; what time a child will spend with a parent or other people important to them;
- how parental responsibility will be shared;
- how parents will communicate about a child;
- how any disputes about what is set out in the orders will be resolved.

Parental responsibility means the duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which, by law, parents have to their children and the important decisions they make about their children. Each parent has parental responsibility for a child unless the Court makes an order changing this.

The Court presumes that parents will have equal shared parental responsibility, unless there has been abuse of a child, family violence, or it is not in the child's best interests.

Equal shared parental responsibility means that the parents need to consult each other about the major long term issues affecting a child, such as education, religion, health, the child's name and changes to the living arrangements of a child that would make it much more difficult for the child to spend time with the other parent.

When an order is made for equal shared parental responsibility, the Court will also consider whether it would be in the child's best interests or practical for the child to spend either equal time with each of the parents, or substantial and significant time with each parent.

The Court will take into account how far apart the parents live, the effect on the child of any proposed arrangements, and how the parents can co-operate with each other.

## **Consent Orders**

There are two circumstances in which parties can obtain consent orders – by applying for orders without starting family law proceedings, or by applying for consent orders during proceedings. There are differences as to which court a person can apply for consent orders depending on whether they apply for consent orders with or without starting family law proceedings.

Parties should consider obtaining legal advice about the effect of the proposed consent orders.

The courts do not automatically approve proposed consent orders, but will review the draft orders to consider whether the orders are in the best interests of the child. This can include consideration of whether there are any family violence or child abuse concerns.

More information about consent orders is available from the Family Law Courts website.

*This information was sourced from the Publications Unit of Legal Aid NSW. This information is also available online at: [www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/pubsonline](http://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/pubsonline)*

*Comprehensive resources about Family Dispute Resolution, Parenting Orders, Parenting after separation, and support services is available by phoning the Family Relationship Advice Line on 1800 050 321 or online at <http://www.familyrelationships.gov.au/>*

# Victims of Crime Services

If you have been the victim of domestic violence, you may be able to receive counselling and/or compensation or other support from NSW Victims Services, through the Victims Compensation Tribunal.

The information provided below outlines the services available.

## ***Victims Support Line***

The Victims Support Line provides 24 hour information, referral and support to victims of crime.

Victims Support Line staff can provide confidential emotional support, in addition to practical information on how to access the Approved Counselling Scheme, or how to access other groups and services that may assist you in your recovery. Victims Support Line staff will also give you information on your rights as a victim of crime.

All support and information can be provided in community languages via an interpreter or by using the TTY machine.

Victims Support Line is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Phone: **(02) 8688 5400** (Sydney metropolitan area only) or

Phone: **1800 633 063** (Freecall)

TTY: **8688 5575** (for people who use a TTY machine)

## ***Counselling and support***

The Approved Counselling Scheme provides free face to face counselling to victims of violent crimes that have occurred in New South Wales.

A written application needs to be made for this service. Contact **8688 5511** or visit the Victims Services website below for more information about the counselling scheme and application forms.

[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/victimsservices/l1\\_vs.nsf/pages/VS\\_counsellingapproved](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/victimsservices/l1_vs.nsf/pages/VS_counsellingapproved)

## ***Compensation***

If the domestic violence happened in New South Wales you may be eligible to receive victims compensation. Generally an application for compensation needs to occur within 2 years of the offence.

You can lodge the application yourself if you wish or be represented by a solicitor. The Law Society can provide you with names of solicitors in your local area who will assist you in completing your application. The number for the Law Society is **(02) 9926 0300 or 1800 422 713** (Toll Free Call outside metropolitan area).

For more information about the referral service visit the Law Society website:

[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/victimsservices/l1\\_vs.nsf/pages/VS\\_compensation](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/victimsservices/l1_vs.nsf/pages/VS_compensation)

Incidents of domestic violence which may result in eligibility for victims compensation and counselling include violent criminal acts that cause injury, such as an assault, sexual assault, intimidation or harassment. You can also claim the compensable injury of *Domestic Violence* if you were injured as a result of intimidation or stalking in apparent contravention of an apprehended violence order.

Not every incident may be viewed as domestic violence and will result in an award of victims compensation. For example, if the act of violence does not constitute a criminal offence, compensation will not be awarded.

Compensation for the compensable injury of *Domestic Violence* ranges from \$7,500 to \$10,000.

The Domestic Violence page on the Victims Services website can give you more information about eligibility criteria and applying for compensation. The following case study is from the website.

### ***Case Study: Domestic Violence***

Ms MN was a 42 year old woman assaulted by her ex-defacto partner as he was returning the children from weekend access. The victim sustained a large laceration to her forehead and needed seven stitches. To support her injuries the victim provided copies of the hospital clinical notes and a number of recent colour photographs showing the scarring. The offender was charged with Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and the court took into account the report from his psychologist and the Probation and Parole Service and sentenced him to 200 hours community service.

Eight months after Ms MN lodged her claim she applied for an Interim Award, due to her financial circumstances. The Assessor awarded her \$2,500 as an Interim award.

In the final determination the Assessor awarded the victim "Facial: scarring (significant disfigurement)": \$8,400. This sum was reduced by the amount of the interim award made earlier, leaving \$5,900. As the claim was less than \$20,001 a deduction of \$750 was also applied. In addition, solicitor's costs of \$825 (including GST) and disbursements of \$32 (for cost of hospital clinical notes) were awarded.

### ***Further information***

**You can also find information on the Victims of Crime website:** This site gives practical support and information and links to people who can help victims of crime. Areas covered include safety, road trauma, court processes, victim impact statements, dealing with the media, victims registers, and support for victims outside NSW.

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/voc>

# Choosing Healthy Relationships

Learning to protect yourself from negative and destructive personalities is one of the most powerful and important lessons in life.

## ***How to recognise these people?***

- They are arrogant and very self confident. They think they are better than you.
- They verbally put you down, telling you 'you are no good', 'you are stupid' or 'you are a loser'. This is hurtful to your spirit and causes you to doubt yourself.
- They simply get away with it, if you don't stand up and do something about it.
- They act as if nothing happened, telling you things like 'I don't know what you're talking about' or 'If you had done what you were supposed to do it would not have happened'. They always place the blame on you and take no responsibility themselves.
- They are jealous and possessive. They often become hostile at the thought of losing you, because they see you as their property.
- They dominate and emotionally control. They expect your complete attention and support and demand your obedience at all times.
- They can't understand their own problem and they are unaware of how it affects others. They are the last people to admit they have a problem.
- They know how to manipulate you to make you feel guilty. This makes you think you are the cause of the problem.
- They stalk you. This is a way to maintain control over you.

## ***How do these people affect your health?***

Being around someone with these destructive behaviours can eventually destroy your health. They kill your spirit and enjoyment of life and you feel depressed and sad.

You may experience:

- Depression
- Low Self-Esteem
- Anxiety
- Fatigue
- Chronic illness
- Guilt
- Anger
- Loneliness
- Weight changes
- Nightmares
- Insomnia
- Emotional problems

## ***How to regain your health, power and spirit***

Start by allowing yourself to feel your real feelings. The sadness, anger and regret are all natural and normal when you have been dealing with destructive personalities. Give yourself time to heal both emotionally and physically.

See the healing time as an opportunity to get back to good eating and exercising again. It's not uncommon for such stressful times to play havoc with your hormones. Look for inexpensive ways to

support your adrenal system, which becomes very depleted when you have fear, anger, sadness and stress in your life for long periods of time. Early nights and lots of rest can help greatly when you are really rundown.

Part of your healing will be to try to understand and express your feelings. Find a counsellor or support group and talk to others who have experienced the same things as you.

Taking up new hobbies such as bush walking, yoga or dancing will help you to gain space and reconnect to your inner self. If you feel your confidence has been squashed, challenge yourself with a new activity that allows you to extend yourself. This will help you re-establish new limits and re-discover that you can do much more than you had previously thought.

Learn by listening to your body. If you need to rest, then learn to do that. You will discover that the human body is strong and able to bounce back when given what it needs to thrive again.

Take a few minutes in each day to do something you enjoy and remember to thank yourself for making the important changes you have making.

Express your feelings through writing or through art or crafts. Use what you have written when you talk to your counsellor. By writing your feelings down or expressing them in your art, this can really help you to heal. Likewise learning something new can help you to laugh again and find your inner creativity.

Destructive people feed off your emotional reactions. As you find yourself becoming stronger, practice using humour and show no fear when this person tries to scare you. You will find they will be less inclined to continue to pursue you because they are not getting the reaction they are after.

### ***Why do you keep attracting destructive people?***

If you are the type of person that goes from one abusive, controlling relationship to another, then find out why. Think about why you are initially attracted to abusers (or perhaps how you are attracting them) and stop going out with them. Refuse to stay in a heartless destructive relationship even if you have fears of being by yourself.

Living in fear can be debilitating and far too many relationships are based on fear rather than love. Abusers know the power that fear has and can often use this power to prevent someone from leaving them. It's impossible to have a good relationship if you stay in it out of fear. Don't believe the lies that 'no one else will love you' or 'you'll be sorry if you leave me' or that something is wrong with you.

You deserve to live surrounded by loving people who respect and love you for who you are, not for who they want to make you into.

Identify all the strong, positive, loving people around you, as they are your support network. Turn towards them for guidance and let them help you achieve freedom.

Remember you have the right not to be a 'victim' for the rest of your life. Things change when you change – so move forward and start living the life you want to live.

*Adapted from an article by Narelle Stegehuis in Living Now. Narelle is a Naturopath specialising in women's hormonal imbalances.*

