

What do I do about Domestic Violence?

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You are not alone.
Inside you will find information on those who
can help and support you.

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What do I do now?

What is Domestic Violence?

Sometimes called woman abuse, family violence, wife assault and / or partner abuse. These are terms that are used to describe violence against individuals in their intimate and private relationships.

Some examples are;

- Husband and wife
- Common-law couple
- Boyfriend and girlfriend
- Same-sex couple

There are times when this type of abuse happens in other kinds of relationships. Examples may be;

- Parent / child
- Brother / sister
- In-law to in-law

Domestic Violence takes on many forms. Some examples can be:

Physical abuse

Verbal abuse

Emotional / psychological abuse

Social abuse

Financial abuse

Sexual abuse

How does domestic violence happen?

Domestic abuse happens when one person in an intimate relationship tries to control and dominate another person. Often, an abuser will use intimidation to gain power over their partner. They may threaten, hurt you, or hurt others close to you as a way to manipulate and control you.

Despite what you may hear, domestic violence is not due to an abuser's loss of control. In fact, violence is a deliberate choice an abuser makes in order to gain control over his / her partner.

Both men and women can be victims of domestic abuse however; women are more commonly victimized in relationships than men. Domestic abuse happens within all ages, ethnic backgrounds, in heterosexual and same-sex relationships and in all financial backgrounds.

How does an abuser gain control?

The following are a list of tactics that an abusive person may use in order to gain control over another person.

- **Dominance** – Abusive individuals need to feel in control of the relationship and will often make attempts to dominate their partner through making decisions for them and for family members. They may tell them what to do, how to act, what to say, and they often expect their partners to be obedient and submissive.
- **Humiliation** – An abuser will go out of his / her way to make a person feel badly about themselves or that there is something wrong with them. Insults, name-calling, public put-downs are all geared to keep their partner believing that they are powerless to leave.
- **Isolation** – An abusive partner will try to cut off their partner from family, friends and other social outlets. Many abused partners have felt like they needed to quit school and / or work in order to keep their abusers happy. Many abused individuals have to ask permission before they are allowed to do anything or go anywhere.
- **Threats** – Abusers will often use threats in order to keep their abused partner from leaving and or from calling for help. They may threaten to hurt their partners, family members, children, pets and even themselves.
- **Intimidation** – Abusers often use a variety of intimidation tactics in order to scare their partners into submission. This could include smashing or breaking things, putting weapons out on display, looks and gestures meant to scare others, taking things away as punishment and any other gesture that insinuates violence if the abused person doesn't obey.
- **Denial and blame** – An abusive person is often very good at blaming everyone else for their behavior. They may blame their bad upbringing, their childhood, their friends, their own children, their boss, their neighbourhood and often the abused person themselves for making them become angry and making the abuse happen. They will often deny the abuse and or minimize it, saying it was justified.

When these behaviours form a pattern, the relationship is abusive. Many women will live in an abusive relationship for years because they don't feel like they have any other choice.

Domestic Abuse Falls into a Common Patter often called the **Cycle of Abuse**.



The cycle of abuse goes something like this. An abuser hurts their partner. Often times, the abuser will feel guilt after this happens and there are times when they will say “sorry for hurting you”. But then the abuser will rationalize their behavior by saying things like “but you’re having an affair” or somehow making sure the abused person knows it’s their fault the abuser hurt them (even if what they are accused of doing is not true). The abuser will often promise to not abuse their partner again. Usually, tension builds up and the abuser may begin to fantasize and think about past times they have hurt their partner. As tension builds, the abuser may do something like send their partner on an errand or task but give a time line or some other limit that makes the task almost impossible. When their partner comes back late or isn’t able to do what the abuser has asked, the abuser has set up their partner and can now justify hurting the person again.

Types of Domestic Violence

Physical Abuse – Physical abuse is the use of physical force in such a way as to injure or hurt or endanger another person. Physical abuse can include slapping, punching, choking, grabbing, pushing, pinching, throwing things and assault with a weapon.

Verbal Abuse – This can include insulting, ridiculing, name calling, blaming, yelling, swearing, publicly humiliating, mimicking and in general any behaviours that diminish a person's self-worth and identity. Verbal Abuse is considered a form of emotional abuse.

Emotional / Psychological Abuse – This can be verbal or non-verbal and is used to erode a person's self-worth, independence, value and importance. Emotional abuse includes rejecting, terrorizing, threatening, degrading, exploiting and denying care and emotional responsiveness. Emotional abuse is incredibly debilitating and can be just as harmful to a person as physical abuse.

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to physical violence and even murder. No one deserves this kind of pain. The first step to breaking free is to recognize that the relationship you are in is abusive. Once you acknowledge the reality of the abusive relationship, then you can get the help you need.

Social Abuse - Social abuse is a new term and is generally defined as follows: 1) the coercion of an individual in a public setting or 2) the collective abuse by a group of people toward an individual. Social abuse uses the power of the group to embarrass and to intimidate.

Financial Abuse – Economic or financial abuse includes; controlling the finances, withholding money and / or credit cards, giving an allowance and / or making a person account for every penny they spend, stealing, exploiting someone for personal financial gain, preventing someone from working or sabotaging their career, and withholding basic necessities like food, shelter, and clothing.

Sexual Abuse – Sexual abuse is any sexual act that a person is forced or coerced to do that they haven't agreed to; that is unsafe and / or is degrading. This can include kissing, touching, oral sex, vaginal sex and / or anal sex. Sexual abuse is common in abusive relationships with up to one-half of abused women having been sexually assaulted by their partners at least once in the relationship.

Do you?

- *Feel afraid of your partner much of the time?*
 - *Avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?*
 - *Feel that you can't do anything right for your partner?*
 - *Believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?*
 - *Wonder if you're the one who is crazy?*
 - *Feel numb or helpless?*
-

Does he?

- *Humiliate, criticize or yell at you?*
- *Treat you so badly that you're embarrassed for others to see?*
- *Ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments?*
- *Blame you for his behavior?*
- *See you as property or as a sex object instead of as a person?*
- *Act overly jealous and possessive?*
- *Control where you go and what you do?*
- *Keep you from seeing your friends and family?*
- *Limit your access to money, phone, the car?*
- *Constantly check up on you?*
- *Have a bad or unpredictable temper?*
- *Hurt you or threaten to hurt or kill you?*
- *Threaten to take your children away or harm them?*
- *Threaten to commit suicide if you leave?*
- *Force you to have sex?*
- *Destroy your belongings?*

Signs of an Abusive Relationship

There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most significant sign is fear of your partner and a partner who belittles or tries to control you.

The more of these you answer yes to, the more likely you are in an abusive relationship.

Do you?

- ✓ *Feel like you have to "walk on eggshells" to keep him from getting angry?*
- ✓ *Feel frightened by his temper?*
- ✓ *Feel like you can't live without him?*
- ✓ *Stop seeing friends or family or stop favorite activities because he doesn't like them?*
- ✓ *Think there is something wrong with you if you don't enjoy the sexual things he makes you to do?*
- ✓ *Feel that you are the only one who can help him?*
- ✓ *Keep quiet about your worries and / or fears about the relationship because you fear his reaction?*
- ✓ *Go along with things because you don't want to hurt his feelings?*
- ✓ *Put up with things because you think no one will ever love you as much as him?*
- ✓ *Stay because he will kill himself if you leave?*
- ✓ *Make excuses and apologize to others for your partner's behavior when he treats you badly?*
- ✓ *Stop expressing your thoughts and feelings if they are different than his?*
- ✓ *Believe that his jealousy is a sign of love?*

Why People Stay	Why People Leave
Some women stay because it is safer than leaving.	You might decide to leave because it is no longer safe for you to stay.
It is easier to protect the children and it keeps him from taking the kids away.	You do not want the children to grow up watching the abuse any longer – or he has begun to hurt the children too.
You are afraid he might hurt himself if you leave.	You are afraid he will continue to hurt you and kids if you stay.
You fear you will be isolated from friends, family and your community if you try to leave and do things on your own.	You have the support of your family and your community.
Your cultural or religious values do not accept separation or divorce.	You have the support of your family and your religious community to allow you to leave.
You cannot afford to leave.	You have access to good information about financial resources and how to get financial help.
You have nowhere to go.	You have found a shelter that will let you and the children come and stay and help you get back on your feet.
You are scared	You are scared.
You still love him and want to try to change his behavior.	You have found someone who can offer you counseling so that you can learn how to get help for yourself and your partner (if able to) without putting yourself in danger at the same time.

What do I do now?

First, make sure that you and your children are as safe as possible in your day to day life. There are people who can help you with this (their numbers are listed below).

Second, gather as much information as possible so that you can make an informed choice about what to do and who can help you. This could include;

- Contacting a women's shelter to talk to a counselor about your situation. Most women's shelters have outreach counselors that will come to you. These counselors can support you emotionally and tell you about the community resources and services you may need in order to help you.
- Learning about the law. Even if you are not thinking of leaving your partner, it does not hurt to learn about the different legal systems and options that you may have available to you. A women's shelter can help you with this.
- Getting support and / or counseling for you children. Even if your partner is only violent towards you, being exposed to this violence will have an impact on the kids. Local agencies and women's shelters have counselors available to help with this.
- Talk to a friend or family member that you know you can trust and who will believe and support you.

Telling the Police

Whether or not you call the police should be your decision. If you do involve the police, you should know that;

- ➔ Ontario has a mandatory charging policy that means the police, not you, make the decision about laying charges against your partner.
- ➔ The police may report you to immigration if they believe your status in Canada is not permanent or you are without status.
- ➔ If you have children, they are required by law to notify Child Protective Services who may or may not wish to talk to you to make sure you are able to keep the kids safe.

Numbers to call for information and assistance in Leeds & Grenville.

Assaulted Women's Helpline (free and confidential) 1-866-863-0511

TTY 1-866-863-7868

Leeds & Grenville Interval House 1-800-267-4409

Assault Response & Care Centre 1-800-567-7415

Legal Aid Ontario 1-800-668-8258

Victim Services of Leeds & Grenville 1-800-939-7682

Child & Youth Wellness Centre 1-800-809-2494