



**Family &
Community Services**
Community Services

Supporting someone who is experiencing domestic and family violence



How to recognise if your
friend or a family member
is experiencing domestic
and family violence



Has a friend or family member approached you and talked about experiencing domestic and family violence? Do you know someone close to you who is suffering domestic and family violence and you want to help? Do you suspect that a friend or family member is experiencing violence and you are not sure what to do?

This brochure will give you some answers to your questions.

Following are some signs that may indicate if someone is experiencing domestic and family violence. Your friend or family member may:

- seem afraid of her partner or is always very anxious to please him
- stop seeing friends or family
- stop her phone calls when her partner comes into the room
- say her partner continually phones or texts her when she is out of the house
- say her partner is 'jealous' and 'possessive' and accuses her of seeing other men
- have become quieter, anxious or depressed, and may have lost her confidence
- have bruises, sprains or cuts on her body
- say her partner gives her no access to money or that he makes her justify every cent she spends
- say her partner wants her to leave her job.

How to talk to your friend or family member



Your response is really important and can make a great difference to your friend or family members future. If your response supports and encourages your friend or family member to talk about the situation, she may feel stronger and start to explore her options.

When approaching your friend or family member to talk about domestic and family violence it is helpful if:

- she is alone with you and she feels safe for her to speak to you
- you approach her in a sensitive way. You could say something like: “I am worried about you because I’ve noticed ...” to start the conversation
- you respect your friend or family member’s decision if she does not want to talk about the domestic and family violence. She may not be ready to talk, she may be fearful of talking or she may feel ashamed. It may take some time for her to feel comfortable and safe to talk about the violence she is experiencing.

When your friend or family member is ready to talk

When your friend or family member is ready to talk, it is important to listen to her and take the issue seriously.

Believe what she tells you.

You may be thinking: “Her partner seems like a really great person”. However, many people who use abusive behaviour can appear caring and charming but this does not indicate the kind of person they are behind closed doors. Many people are only abusive to their partners in private.



Focus on how she is feeling and how she is coping with the domestic and family violence.

For example, ask your friend or family member: “How have you been managing? How is his behaviour affecting you?”

Let her know domestic and family violence is not her fault.

Tell her that she does not deserve violent and abusive treatment. You could say things like: “The way he is treating you is wrong, it’s abuse” or “He may feel angry but he has a choice in how he expresses his anger. He can walk away and go into another room.” Anger is never an excuse for domestic and family violence.

Focus on her safety and her children’s safety.

Let her know you are worried about her and her children’s safety. Say things like: “I am really afraid for your safety.”

Let her know you are there for her (if this does not put your safety at risk).

Ask her: “What can I do to help you?”

Let her know about the NSW Domestic Violence Line.

At the NSW Domestic Violence Line counsellors will talk to your friend or family member, as well as to you if required, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It can be reached toll free on 1800 65 64 63, TTY 1800 67 14 42 (Interpreters are available).

What to avoid when talking to your friend or family member

When talking to your friend or family member there are some things to avoid as they may lead to her feeling judged or criticised. She could become too afraid or ashamed to talk about the domestic and family violence.

Avoid blaming your friend or family member for the domestic violence.

It is likely your friend may be blaming herself for the domestic violence and may even say to you: "It's my fault". It is important not to agree with her as no one deserves to be abused no matter what. It is a crime.

Suggesting she must have done something wrong to provoke the abuse is not supportive. For example do not ask: "What did you do to make him treat you like that?"

Her partner chooses to perpetrate violence against her to maintain power and control in the relationship.

Avoid blaming alcohol, other drugs or mental health issues for his domestic violence behaviour.

Alcohol, other drugs and mental health issues do not cause domestic violence,

his need for power and control does. Many people use alcohol and other drugs but are never abusive to their partners.

Avoid telling her what to do.

When you care about someone and want them to be safe, it is understandable you may want to tell them what to do. But your friend or family member may have lost some of her self-esteem, confidence and decision-making skills due to her partner's controlling and abusive behaviour.

To support her in making a decision, she needs to be able to explore options and make her own choices. This will help her to gain back her self-confidence. Giving information about domestic and family violence and her options for support rather than telling her what to do can support her to make her own choices and decisions.

Avoid talking to the abuser about his behaviour.

Confronting the partner about his abusive behaviour may place you and your friend or family member in danger.

Avoid making negative comments about her partner.

It is understandable that if your friend or family member's partner's behaviour is abusive you may feel anger, disgust and hatred towards him. However, if you share any negative comments about the partner with your friend or family member it may lead to her feeling she needs to protect him and stand up for him. It is not supportive to talk about him. It is supportive to focus on her feelings and safety.

For help and further information ring the NSW Department of Community Services' Domestic Violence Line on 1800 65 64 63.



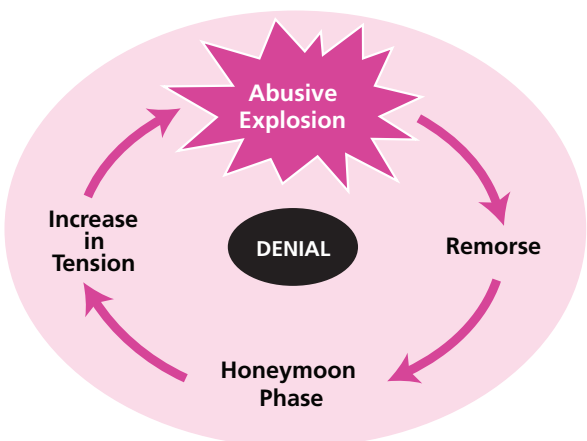
Do not expect that your friend or family member will leave the relationship.

It can be very disturbing to know someone you care about is experiencing domestic and family violence. So it is only natural to think: “I want her to leave him”, “Why doesn’t she just leave?” and “How can she still say she loves him?”

But ending any relationship is difficult. Ending a relationship where there is domestic and family violence can be extremely difficult.

There are many reasons why it may be hard for her to leave:

- She may have been threatened by her partner. He may have told her he will harm her, himself, her family or the children if she leaves him.
- She may hope her partner will change and go back to how he behaved at the beginning of their relationship.
- She may think the abuse is her fault and if she changes, the domestic and family violence will stop.
- She may be committed to the relationship or the belief that marriage is forever.
- She may be committed to the belief that her children need to live with both parents.
- She may be experiencing pressure from her family or community to stay with her partner.
- She may be worried about where she will live and how she will manage financially.
- She may be afraid she may not be able to cope by herself.



The cycle of domestic violence

For help and further information call the
Community Services NSW Domestic Violence
Line toll free on **1800 65 64 63**
TTY **1800 67 14 42**
Statewide Service
24 hours a day 7 days a week
Interpreters available

People featured in photographs in this brochure are models only and they are not in need of care because of domestic violence.

In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, seeing images of deceased persons in photographs, film and books or hearing them in recordings may cause sadness or distress and in some cases, offend against strongly held cultural prohibitions. Community Services wishes to apologise for any resources that may contain images of persons now deceased.



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Telephone 02 9716 2222
Facsimile 02 9716 2999
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