



HEART 2 HEART

**HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO IS
EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC AND/OR
FAMILY VIOLENCE**

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This booklet has been developed to provide those affected by domestic and family violence with information about specialist domestic and family violence services within the Moreton Bay Region.

The booklet aims to raise community awareness and will support community organisations and individuals to respond to domestic and family violence, by providing a practical guide to facilitate conversations for persons who have or are experiencing family and domestic violence.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging, for they hold the traditions, the culture and hopes of First Nations People. We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to live in spiritual and sacred relationships with this country.

We acknowledge all of the specialist domestic and family violence practitioners in the Moreton Bay Region for their crucial and important impact in partnering with families through passion and dedication to make safer communities.

We would like to thank Moreton Bay Creative Communities project which provided funding for the development of this booklet. We would also like to acknowledge Kerryn Smith, Renee Craft, Monique Barendregt and Angela Pritchard from Domestic Violence System's Coordination Project (DVSC - Mercy Community) who have been instrumental in the development and writing of this booklet.

Protea artwork created by Gabrielle Holloway.

We hope you find this resource helpful and informative.

INTRODUCTION TO 'HEART 2 HEART'

Many couples and families have disagreements from time-to-time, and this is very normal. When people are in a healthy relationship, both partners are treated equally, with respect and dignity, and feel comfortable to express themselves to each other without feeling fear or intimidation.

In a domestic and family violence relationship, the perpetrator of abuse chooses to use coercive behaviours against the other person in order to instil fear and gain power and control in the relationship.

Domestic and Family Violence is Never OK.

Domestic and family violence can affect **anyone** regardless of gender identity, age, income, education, ethnicity, culture, sexual identity, health status or religion.

While men can be victims of domestic and family violence, research indicates that domestic and family violence is mostly perpetrated by men towards women and children.

Domestic and family violence can occur in an intimate relationship with a current partner, with a former intimate partner, by a family member, or in an informal care relationship.

You may know someone who has, or is currently affected by domestic and family violence. It can be hard to know what to do, or how to best provide support.

This booklet aims to help you to have a 'Heart 2 Heart' conversation with someone who might be experiencing domestic and family violence. This booklet provides information about recognising the signs of domestic and family violence, what to say, and what not to say, where to seek help, and how to take care of yourself through self-care.

If you know someone who is experiencing domestic and family violence, you can be part of a solution and you might even help to save someone's life.

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, please contact the Police on Triple Zero (000).

There are free support services available that can provide advice and work with people experiencing domestic and family violence.

Specialist Domestic Violence Service for Moreton Bay Region and Surrounds:

Centre Against Domestic Abuse (CADA)

Phone: 5498 9533

Email: info@cada.org.au

Website: <https://www.cada.org.au/>

Office Hours:

Monday – Friday

9am – 5pm.

National Domestic and Family Violence Support Line:

DVConnect

Phone:

1800 811 811 (Women's Line)

1800 600 363 (Men's Line)

Hours: 24 hours/ 7 days

Website: <https://www.dvconnect.org/>

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE?

Domestic and family violence takes many forms and is **not only physical abuse**.

Domestic and family violence is about **power and control** which presents as behaviours designed to intentionally and deliberately make a person **fearful, intimidated, threatened and suppressed**.

Examples of domestic and family violence include:

VERBAL ABUSE

- Name calling, criticising or insulting you
- Screaming and yelling at you or the children
- Making verbal threats to harm or kill you or the children
- Undermining you or making fun of your opinions, beliefs or practices

PHYSICAL ABUSE

- Hitting, punching, kicking, pushing, pulling your hair, slapping you
- Strangulation. Sometimes called 'choking'
- Using weapons such as guns, knives or other objects against you or used to destroy your property and personal items

SOCIAL ABUSE

- Isolating you from friends and family. This may take the form of moving you to a geographically isolated location away from your support networks. Or it might look like constant 'put downs' or criticisms about your family and friends so that it is difficult to maintain a relationship with them
- Controlling who you can and cannot socialise with
- Criticising you in front of friends and family
- Checking your phone or email to see who you have been talking with

FINANCIAL ABUSE

- Controlling your access to money, including your own, so that you become financially dependent

- Expected to follow an inadequate budget that doesn't meet the basic needs of yourself and your children (e.g. food, clothing, healthcare, accommodation)
- Being forced to sign loan agreements that you don't agree to
- Being constantly questioned about your purchases

SEXUAL ABUSE

- Forcing you to have sex or engage in ANY sexual activity that you do not want to do

PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

- Includes behaviours that undermine your self-esteem and self-confidence
- Silent treatment or 'withdrawal' from you so that your needs are neglected
- Threats to suicide if you leave the relationship
- Threats to harm pets
- "Gaslighting" you – A form of abuse that causes the person to question their feelings, instincts and sanity as the perpetrator attempts to override the victim's reality with their own. You may find that you are constantly 'second-guessing' yourself, feeling confused, always apologising to the perpetrator for 'being too sensitive' or 'overreacting', and feeling 'crazy'

SPIRITUAL / CULTURAL ABUSE

- Being prevented from practising your cultural, spiritual or religious beliefs
- Ridiculing or undermining your cultural, spiritual or religious practices
- Being forced to practice cultural, spiritual or religious activities that you do not want to do

Other examples of abuse may include:

STALKING BEHAVIOUR

- Behaviours may include following and watching you in public places such as when you are at work, shopping, children's activities (e.g. sports)
- Driving past your house and/or monitoring who is visiting your house
- Making persistent phone calls or sending text messages, emails or mail to you
- Hanging around in places that you typically attend in order to watch or 'bump' into you

TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED ABUSE

- Threatening to share intimate images or videos online or to your friends and family
- Monitoring or 'hacking' into your social media accounts, bank accounts or email to read your messages and track your activities
- Placing a GPS tracking device on your car to monitor your location
- Hacking into your Smart TV, Smart Phone or laptop to access the devices webcam, microphone and other personal information to monitor and record your activities
- Using a child's mobile phone or tablet device to monitor the location and gain other personal information
- Using a drone to monitor and record your activities

REPRODUCTIVE ABUSE

- Refusing to use birth control or sabotaging birth control methods (e.g. poking holes in the condom or refusing to wear one)
- Not allowing you to use contraception (e.g. take the pill)
- Forcing or pressuring you to get pregnant
- Forcing or pressuring you to get an abortion or preventing you from having one
- Knowingly having passed a sexually transmitted infection onto you

NEGLECT

The elderly, people with a disability or health issue, and children may be more vulnerable to experiencing this type of abuse. This may include:

- Basic needs not being met, such as adequate food, water or clothing
- Failure to meet personal care or hygiene needs
- Being denied access or transportation to attend appointments such as to healthcare services
- Inadequate accommodation that is not clean, safe or private
- Denied access to participate in leisure and social activities

WARNING SIGNS OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

While domestic and family violence often happens behind closed doors, there are some warning signals that you might notice that could indicate someone you know is experiencing domestic violence:

- Seem afraid of their partner, or always anxious to please them
- They stop seeing you, or other friends and family. They appear socially isolated
- They become anxious or depressed, unusually quiet or less confident than in the past
- Be denied adequate care if they are an older person (elder abuse), or a person with a disability
- Have a partner who is controlling, obsessive or jealous
- Have a partner who has threatened to harm them, their children or pets
- Have a partner who continually phones or texts them to check on them
- Have physical injuries such as bruises, sprains or cuts on their body
- Give unlikely explanations for these injuries (i.e. “I fell”; “I ran into the wall/door”)
- Be reluctant to leave their children with the abuser
- Suspect they are being followed, watched or stalked
- Say their partner or carer gives them no access to money or makes them excessively justify and explain their spending.
- Express they feel they are confused, going ‘crazy’, are always apologising to their partner or are feeling like they can’t do anything right

SIGNS OF 'HIGH RISK'

It is important to know that sometimes there are situations that may increase a person's risk of experiencing domestic and family violence.

These situations are considered 'high risk' as there is an increased likelihood for serious harm or homicide to occur. These include:

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Recent separation or plans to leave the relationship | • Threats to kill them or their children |
| • Pregnancy or birth of a new baby | • Threats or attempts to suicide by the perpetrator |
| • Stalking behaviour | • Past injuries or hospitalisations for abuse |
| • Sexual violence | • Controlling or jealous behaviour |
| • Strangulation | • Use of weapons |

Other things to consider include:

Escalation – Has there been an increase in the frequency of the violence?

Severity – Has there been an increase in the intensity of the violence?

Perception of own risk – How fearful is the person that more harm may occur?

It is also important to note that strangulation can have serious, life-threatening impacts on a person in the days, weeks or even months after the incident itself. It is important for the person to see a doctor or the hospital to be assessed for injuries.

HOW TO SUPPORT

The way you respond to someone who is experiencing domestic and family violence is really important.

If you are able to respond in a way that is open, nonjudgmental and supportive, the person you are concerned about may feel comfortable to discuss their situation with you, explore their options and consider seeking help from a specialist domestic and family violence service.

The person may deny that there is a problem, deny your support or become defensive.

It is important not to be surprised or offended if this happens. They may be afraid to tell you what is really going on, be scared of worrying you, or they may not think what is happening for them is domestic and family violence.

It is common for people who are experiencing domestic and family violence to minimise the abuse rather than exaggerate the situation. They are likely to make excuses for their partner's abusive behaviour. The person may have kept this issue a secret from others. If they choose to confide in you it is important to listen and help where you can, while respecting their right to make their own decisions.



HOW CAN I HELP?

Below are some tips and strategies for supporting someone experiencing domestic and family violence:

- Listen to what they have to say, without judgement and take it seriously
- Be open and show you believe what they are telling you
- Talk with them about the different types of domestic and family violence – it is not just physical violence
- Let them know the violence or abuse is not their fault
- Focus on their safety and their children's safety. How have they been keeping themselves safe?
- Let them know there is help available and where to go (listed at the back of this book)
- Respect their right to make their own decisions and support them. Ask what they want to do and what they might need, as opposed to telling them what they should do.

HOW DO I START THE CONVERSATION?

Below are some tips on how you may approach the person you are concerned about:

- Make sure that you are alone, and in a safe place for them to talk with you. Find a time to speak when the person is not feeling rushed or distracted.
- Approach them in a sensitive, respectful and caring way – you could say: "I am worried about you. I've noticed you seem unhappy lately"
- Be mindful of what you are messaging or emailing them – their partner may monitor their phone and computer.
- Respect their decision if they don't want to talk. They may be afraid, ashamed, or not ready to discuss their situation. Accept where they are at with their situation and let them know that you are there for them if they need someone to talk with.

If they do choose to talk with you, you can say things like;

- “Can you tell me what has been happening for you?”
- “How have you been feeling?”
- “What would you like to have happen?”
- “What supports do you think you need?”
- “That must be really hard for you, thank you so much for sharing with me”
- “I am here for you if you need someone to talk with”
- “This is not your fault, and there is help and support available”
- “The safety of you and your children is really important to me – what are some things that could be put in place to keep you safe?”

It is best to use questions and statements that are ‘open’ as opposed to questions that require straight yes/no answers. This will allow the person to tell their story in their own words and encourage discussion and disclosure.

Above everything else, it is important to **actively listen** and be **present**. To demonstrate this, you could say things like:

- “It sounds like you have been feeling ...e.g sad/fearful/anxious/ scared when this happens“
- “I am hearing that you would like for (Outcome) to happen. Am I right in thinking that?”

Actively reflecting and summarising back on their responses will make the person feel acknowledged, understood and listened to.

SEEKING HELP

It can be very difficult for a person experiencing domestic and family violence to seek help and speak with a specialist domestic violence service.

It may be useful to have a conversation with the person around what they can expect when calling a service.

- They will chat with someone who understands domestic and family violence and can talk to them about their options
- They will have someone that will listen to them without judgement
- Their story will be taken seriously and will be believed.
- They may be asked about their current safety and the safety of any children
- What support is currently in place for them
- Are there any special needs or disabilities to be considered.



WHY DO PEOPLE STAY?

There are many reasons why people stay in domestic and family violence relationships. This is a complex and personal issue. It is not as simple as “Their partner is abusive, why don’t they just leave?”.

Here are a few reasons why someone may stay in an abusive relationship:

- The abuser may have threatened to harm or kill them, their children, family, friends, pets or even themselves if they leave
- They might hope the abuser will change, or that they can help them to change
- They may feel the abuse is their fault, and if they change then the abuse and/or violence will stop
- They may not want the relationship to end – they just want the abuse to stop.
- They may downplay the impacts of being exposed to domestic and family violence on themselves or their children
- They may not want to ‘break-up’ their family. There may also be religious or cultural beliefs around marriage, gender roles and responsibilities.
- They may be worried about where they will live and how they will manage financially, or be afraid of coping by themselves.
- Other friends, family, colleagues or members of their community might be pressuring them to stay
- If the abusive person is their carer, they may be afraid that no one else will be available to care for them or feel dependent on their abuser

Ending a domestic and family violence relationship can be extremely difficult.

Many women leave and return back to the relationship a number of times before deciding to leave the relationship permanently.

Leaving does not necessarily mean that the abuse and violence will stop.

Leaving can actually be a time where the violence may escalate and the person and their children are at greater risk because the abuser may feel they are losing power and control over them.

Some people may never leave their abusive relationship, and it is their right to make that decision.

As a support person, it might be hard to come to terms with the fact that the person you are concerned about might make this choice. In this situation, it is important to remember that this is completely their decision.

Here are a few things that you could do:

- Ask how they currently keep themselves/their children safe in their relationship and talking about other ways they can keep themselves safe
- Recommend they seek help and support from a specialist domestic and family violence service provider to make a safety plan
- Remind them that you are there for them if they need to talk
- Encourage them to phone the Police on Triple Zero (000) if they or their children are in immediate danger

WHAT NOT TO DO

It can be really difficult for someone experiencing domestic and family violence to talk to someone about their situation.

You do not want them to feel judged, criticised, or ashamed to talk about their experiences.

Here are some tips about what to avoid when supporting someone experiencing abuse:

- Do not blame them for the abuse or violence – don't say things like "what did you do to make them treat you like that?" or "Well you choose to stay in this situation, why don't you just leave?"
- Avoid telling them what to do, instead help them explore their options and make their own choices about what they want to do
- Don't look for excuses and avoid blaming the abusive behaviour on drugs, alcohol, gambling or mental health issues
- Don't make 'at least' comments, for example: "at least you have a roof over your head", "at least your face isn't bruised" or "at least the kids have a father figure" – these statements shame the victim and are unhelpful
- Avoid making negative comments about the abuser – remember that the person very likely loves this person, despite their behaviour and may want to defend them if you make negative comments
- Be careful not to break that persons' confidentiality, or place them at further risk of being abused
- Don't talk to the abuser about their behaviour. Confronting the abuser about their behaviour may place you, the person you are trying to support and/or their children in danger

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF & SELF-CARE

Domestic and family violence is a very serious community issue and supporting someone experiencing domestic and family violence can be very difficult. You may find it hard to cope yourself. If you are supporting someone in this situation, it is critical to take care of yourself and your own safety.

If you are supporting someone, here are some things to consider for your own self-care:

- Get yourself some support – talk with a counsellor from DV Connect, 1800 RESPECT or other domestic violence support service. Otherwise, talk with a friend (not the friend experiencing domestic and family violence) or family member, but be sure not to break confidentiality or place the person you are supporting at further risk
- Be clear with yourself and the person you are supporting about what support you can give them, how much, and what your boundaries are.
- Be sure to keep doing things that you enjoy. This helps you keep your life balanced (e.g. walking or other exercise, craft, spiritual/religious practices, meditation, singing etc.)
- Treat yourself well – eat well, exercise, drink enough water, get adequate sleep.

We hope that this book has helped you to understand what domestic and family violence is and the different forms of abuse, how you can identify if someone you know might be experiencing domestic and family violence, how to have a 'Heart 2 Heart' conversation with someone about your concerns for them and what to do for yourself to avoid vicarious trauma. For further information, 1800 RESPECT and DV Connect both have valuable information and resources on their websites or you could phone them to learn more.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

1800RESPECT	1800 737 732
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service	(07) 3205 1253
Bribe Island Neighbourhood Centre	(07) 3408 8440
Caboolture Neighbourhood Centre	(07) 5495 3818
Centre Against Domestic Abuse (CADA) (Caboolture)	(07) 5498 9533
Centrelink – Department of Human Services: Families	136150
Centacare Family Relationship Centre (Chermside)	07 3251 5000
Churches of Christ – Intensive Family Support Service (Caboolture)	(07) 5490 6450
Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women North Coast Regional Intake Service	1300 703 921
DV Connect (Women’s line)	1800 811 811
Elder Abuse Prevention Unit	1300 651 192
Encircle Lawnton Neighbourhood Centre	(07) 3889 0063
Encircle Redcliffe Neighbourhood Centre	(07) 3284 3081
Family and Child Connect (FaCC)	13 32 64
Family Relationship Advice Line	1800 050 321
Immigrant Women’s Support Service (IWSS)	(07) 3846 3490
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) Caboolture	(07) 5428 5855

Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) Strathpine	(07) 3897 0500
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) Morayfield	(07) 5429 1000
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) Deception Bay	(07) 3884 1999
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) Margate	(07) 3480 8100
Legal Aid Queensland	1300 65 11 88
LGBTI Legal Service	(07) 3124 7160
Mission Australia – Intensive Family Support Service Deception Bay & Pine Rivers	(07) 3385 8600
Pine Rivers Community Legal Service	3881 3500
Police Link (non-urgent) 131 444	131 444
Relationship’s Australia (Strathpine)	1300 364 277
Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)	3846 9300
Q-Life counselling and referrals	1800 184 527
Queensland State-wide Sexual Assault Helpline	1800 010 120
QLD Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFVLS)	1800 887 700 or help@qifvls.com.au
QLD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS)	1800 012 255
Women’s Legal Service	1800 957 957
Victim’s Assist Queensland	1300 546 587

Contact details listed above are accurate as of January 2019.

In an emergency contact Emergency Services (Police, Fire, Ambulance) on Triple Zero (000).

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This booklet is a project developed by Domestic Violence System Coordination (DVSC), Moreton Bay coordinating an integrated response to Domestic and Family Violence.

Contact **07 5490 8000** Email **DVSC@mercycommunity.org.au**

 **mercy**
COMMUNITY