

# Domestic violence

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## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is abuse in many different forms, but basically it is the misuse of power and the exercise of control by one adult, man or woman, over another adult. It can happen in heterosexual and gay relationships. Domestic abuse can be experienced by men as well as women, regardless of age, race, class, colour, ability, religion and sexuality and usually takes place in secret, in the privacy of your own home. Starting with small things it escalates in frequency, intensity and variety over time. It is generally denied by the perpetrator who takes no responsibility for their behaviour. Usually, but not always, this happens within a close personal relationship where the person is a partner or ex-partner. Abuse is not simply physical, it can also be emotional, psychological, verbal, sexual and financial.

### *Physical abuse*

Probably the easiest type of abuse to identify and includes: pushing, biting, hitting, punching, slapping, burning, strangling and kicking. Using a weapon, throwing things (usually yours) and ultimately, murder.

### *Emotional or psychological abuse*

This can include: constant criticism and belittling comments, threats to you, your family, the children. Embarrassing or

humiliating you in private or publicly, lying, making you feel that you are stupid or crazy. Isolating you from friends and family, controlling where you go and what you do. Harassing and following you, checking up on you, opening your mail. Telling you that you aren't good enough, not a real man and also being excluded from spending time with your children.

### *Verbal abuse*

This can range from jokes about you, through name calling to out-and-out foul-mouthed abuse.

### *Sexual abuse*

This includes all forced and unwanted sexual activity. It may also include withdrawing sex or making it conditional on you doing something for them, or withholding affection to 'punish' you for not obeying their rules. This can also include feeling forced to have sex when you don't want to.

### *Financial abuse*

Obsessive control of all monies so that you do not know what was being spent and when. Having to ask for money and account for what you have spent. Being suddenly faced with huge debts that you knew nothing about.

## What does domestic abuse feel like?

Each person's experience will be unique but if you are in an abusive relationship you may feel some or all of the following:

- Isolated. You may be afraid to tell anyone what is really going on for fear of being disbelieved or ridiculed. Men who are being abused may think that they will not be taken seriously or be unsure of whether they can be a 'victim' of domestic abuse or not.
- Confused about why a person you love can treat you this way, or confused because sometimes they are loving and kind.
- Confused about what they are saying with messages like 'I hate you' or later on 'don't leave me'.
- Frustrated and sad because you feel that you have tried everything and still cannot sort the relationship out.
- Depressed or anxious, humiliated by the ongoing abuse.
- Constantly on edge and worried about how your partner will react.
- Threatened by the behaviour of your partner.
- Guilty about leaving them or scared of coping alone.
- Worried about financial security if you leave.
- Afraid of the repercussions if you take any action – like continued violence, becoming homeless, or losing contact with the children.
- Feeling paralysed – whatever you do will only make things worse.



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Domestic abuse – men as the victims

A common myth is that only women suffer from domestic abuse. Actually according to the National Report on Domestic Violence (Home Office 2005), one man in six is likely to be a victim of domestic abuse in their lifetime. The 2001/2002 British Crime Survey found that 19% of domestic abuse incidents were reported to be male victims with just under half of these being committed by a female abuser. In Surrey, police statistics for April 2005 to March 2006 show that 24.1% of referrals were from men.

Yet many men who experience domestic abuse from a current or former partner can

find it difficult to get support not least because it can be hard for men to acknowledge and discuss their experiences. This silence can be due to any number of reasons, including love for a partner, embarrassment or shame and concern for any children or simply not knowing where to go.

Even so, it is vital you seek help if you are a victim of domestic abuse or are becoming one. Do not suffer in silence as there are people who can help you to live in a safer environment that is free of violence and abuse.



## What you can do

- Recognising that you are in an abusive relationship is an important first act. Things will not change for the better if you do nothing.
- Keep a record of dates and times of incidents.
- Report the violence to the police – visit your local station and ask to speak to a Domestic Violence Officer in confidence.
- Seek medical attention for any injuries – do not cover up the true cause.
- Seek legal advice.
- Tell family and friends that you trust what is going on.
- Make safety arrangements such as organising a safe place to go, changing your telephone number and locks.
- Protect the children.
- Do not be provoked into retaliating.
- Talk over your situation with your local outreach service.

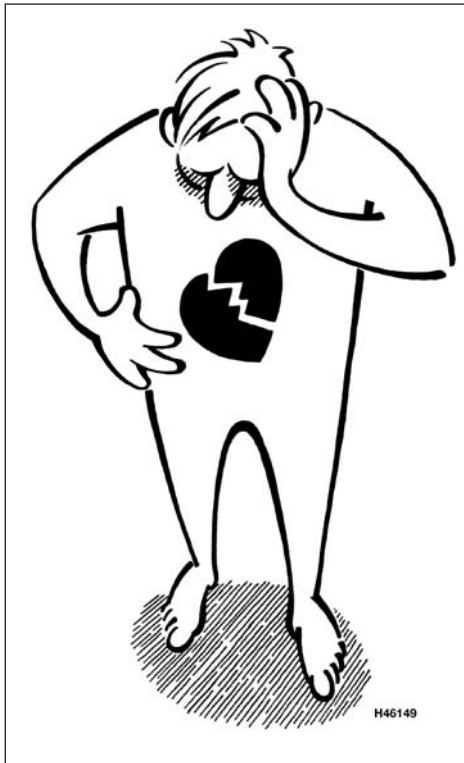


DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Myths and facts

*Myth: Men are less affected by domestic abuse than women*

Fact: The experience of domestic abuse is unique for each person, but it can destroy confidence and self esteem in both men and



women. In addition, men have identified similar difficulties as women around housing options, financial problems, contact with children, relationship breakdown.

*Myth: Men should be able to handle it*

Fact: No one should have to live with violence, fear or abuse.

*Myth: Men who experience domestic abuse are not 'real men'*

Fact: Domestic abuse is about power and control of one person over another. It can happen to any man, in both heterosexual and gay relationships and does not indicate that the man is 'weak' or 'ineffectual'.

*Myth: The abuser cannot help it*

Fact: There are many excuses given for violence and abusive behaviour: alcohol, stress, drugs, hormones, oppression, inability to express yourself any other way, anger, traumatic childhood. But domestic abuse is chosen behaviour and there are no excuses for one person treating another in an aggressive and bullying way.

## How men try to cope

Men who experience domestic abuse may try different techniques to cope. Some of these will include:

- Adopting an 'I can handle this' attitude.
- Being careful about what you say, When and how you say it. You may have given up doing anything likely to upset them.
- Adapting your behaviour to do what they demand.
- Sleeping somewhere where you feel safer, including the car, hostels or at friends.
- By staying late at work to avoid going home.
- Using drugs or alcohol.
- Leaving home.



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# Help for men who are using violence in their relationship

Victims of domestic abuse are not the only ones who need help. It takes strength to admit that you are abusing your partner and courage to change.

### Step 1

- Recognise that you are abusive in your relationship.
- Is your partner frightened of you?
- Is your relationship suffering because of your behaviour?
- Domestic abuse comes in many forms, but it is always about control – forcing your partner to do what you want, when you want.

### Step 2

- Recognise that your abusive behaviour affects your whole family.
- Violence and abuse have a devastating effect on children. You may think that your children do not know what is going on because you are not abusive in front of them, but they will hear the abuse and sense the tension in the family. There is much evidence to show that children are

harmed by abuse even if they do not witness it. Alternatively they could be caught in the crossfire or may intervene to protect your partner.

### Step 3

- Choose to stop.
- Decide that you no longer want to control and abuse. Only you can take control over your own behaviour and learn not to be violent and abusive whatever the situation.

### Step 4

- Take responsibility for your behaviour and for the abuse. Stop blaming your actions on your partner or on anything else – drink, drugs, stress, unemployment.
- Do not minimise your behaviour by thinking that it isn't too bad. How bad does it need to be before you do anything?

### Step 5

- Seek help.
- You can promise yourself over and over again that it won't happen again, but it probably will if you do nothing more. Do something before the next time.



## Action plan

### *Spot the warning signs!*

- Be aware when things are heating up and when you are getting into a situation where you may be abusive towards your partner.
- Make a note of your *sore spots*. These may be typical situations when you have been abusive before.
- Think about what is happening to you physically as you begin to become violent and abusive – your *physical warning signs*.
- Think about what you begin to do. Do you point your finger, close your fist, pace up and down, shout, glare, interrupt, go quiet, issue orders, get right up close?
- Watch out for feelings that come just before you become abusive or violent. Do you feel resentment? Anger? Trapped? Guilty? Upset? Hurt? These are your *emotional warning signs*.
- Think about the negative things that you are saying to yourself as you get closer to being abusive – these are your *mental warning signs*. These will be negative things about your partner, things to justify your actions such as ‘he/she is doing this deliberately.’
- Note also the things that you do not say to yourself such as how your partner is feeling, trying to understand or listen to what your partner is saying.

### *Remember – it is never too late to make another choice*

- You can walk away.
- Right up to the moment you are abusive or violent, you can choose to do otherwise.

### *Take time out!*

Time out is the most basic alternative to being violent – if you are not near to your partner you cannot hurt or abuse them. It

gives you space to calm down and reflect on your behaviour.

- Once you spot warning signs, you should get away for *exactly* one hour and leave the situation before things build up and you are violent.
- Calm yourself down. Walk, take some exercise, meditate or pray – or it may help to talk to a friend who is supporting you in being non abusive.
- Examine your behaviour. Think about your behaviour and any negative thoughts that you were having. Think about alternatives to your behaviour and what you are going to do or say when you get back to your partner. Remember you will need to be able to return and be different, rather than try to make your partner different.
- Return home. Before you return home, call your partner to let them know that you have calmed down and are returning. If your partner wants to discuss the situation with you, do so in a non abusive and non blaming way. Do not force someone to talk to you when you want, as that would be abusive. Respect your partner’s wish not to discuss the situation and wait for a mutually convenient opportunity.
- Talk to your partner about Time Outs so that your partner knows ahead of time what strategy you are using to manage your violence.

### *Talk to a professional or join a programme*

It is not normally possible for perpetrators of domestic abuse to solve all their problems themselves. Once you have identified that you have a problem, get help and support from one of the agencies listed later who will be able to advise you what to do next, or direct you to a programme near you.

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Dealing with stress without alcohol

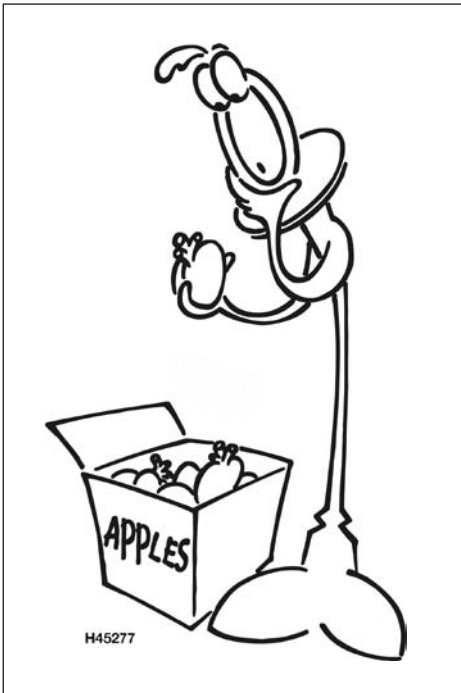
Sometimes stress can feel overwhelming. This may trigger you to feel anxious or depressed. You can get help and support to deal with this. Speak to a GP, practice nurse or pharmacist. They can give you advice on how to cope and discuss treatments.

### *Diet*

Try to avoid taking refuge in smoking, junk food or alcohol. This won't help stress levels. Avoid caffeinated and sugary drinks as they may make you feel more anxious – bursts of sugar can cause mood swings.

### **Right now**

Drink plenty of water. This will help you concentrate better and may stop you getting



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stress headaches which can be caused by dehydration.

### **For good**

Improving your diet and drinking plenty of water will increase your body's resistance to stress. Eating fruit and vegetables boosts your immune system, especially in times of stress. Make small changes to increase your intake like chopping a banana on your cereal and having a glass of fresh fruit juice with your lunch. It's important to make time for proper meals to help you stay energised.

### *Talking about stress*

This may help you see things in a different light and help you find a way forward in tackling practical problems that may be causing you stress. Try not to go it alone. A good support network, even if it's just one other person, can help you deal with stress. Talk with family or friends about how you are feeling – they may be able to offer their support. Don't be afraid to ask for their help, even if it's just to lend an ear.

### *Work*

Work is generally good for our well-being but, at times, can be stressful. Getting help to improve your work environment or prioritising tasks can help. Good working relationships are important in dealing with stress. Identifying colleagues who have knowledge of particular areas or who can simply offer a friendly ear can really help to relieve pressure.

If you can't find a solution, highlight the problem with your boss – they can support you in finding positive ways to reduce work related stress. If you find it difficult to broach

the subject consider the following tips:

- Book a time to meet with your boss.
- Prepare – think about what is causing you stress and any potential solutions you may have. Make a note of these to discuss.
- Think about positive changes that you would like to make to help you work more effectively.
- Make a list of points and questions that you want to cover – especially if you're feeling under pressure as it's easy to forget things.
- Help your boss to help you by giving them the information they need.
- Find out if there are any training courses that may help you cope better – like time management or problem solving. If you

need training for an area of work that is causing you stress your boss may be able to organise this for you.

- Follow up – arrange a meeting to make sure that you and your boss are happy with how things are progressing and that your stress levels have gone down!

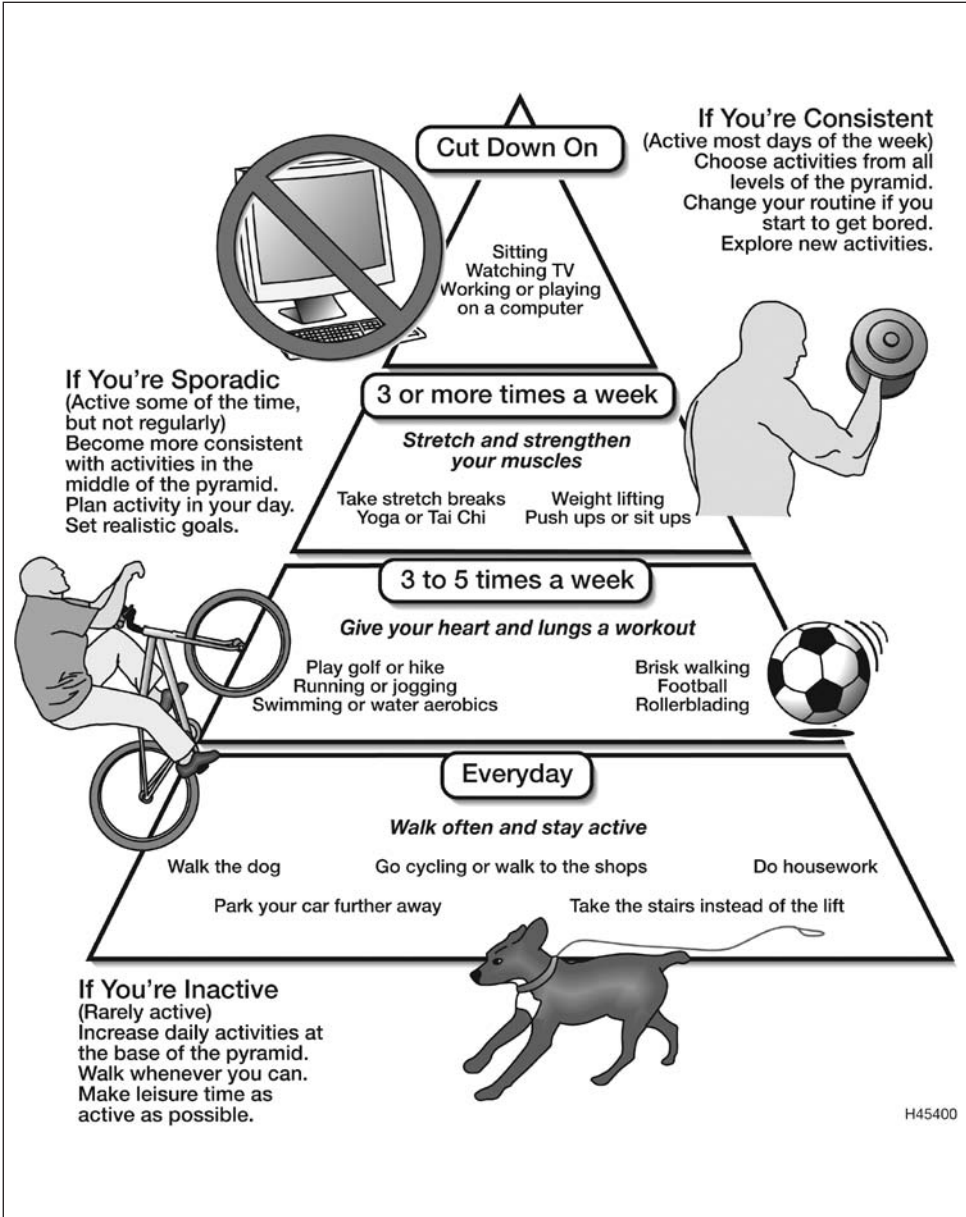
There are also voluntary organisations who can offer advice (see later).

### Right now

Go for a quick walk round the block – this can help clear your head and put problems in perspective so you can tackle them with renewed energy. If you work, get some fresh air and get moving during breaks.



# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



**For good**

Taking time out from your routine may help you deal with, and avoid, stress. If you have young children it is important to get a break. Try organising a family member, friend or neighbour to look after them for an evening, or take it in turns with your partner to have time to yourselves. If you work, try to avoid doing long hours, take proper holidays when you can and take breaks away from your work area each day.

**Exercise**

Exercise has a positive effect on the common symptoms of stress and it can help to prevent stress related ill-health.

Aim to do at least 30 minutes of activity a day. This doesn't have to be done all at once and can be done in bouts of 10 minutes. Regular activity may help reduce stress levels as well as getting you fit and making you feel good. Try building activity into your daily routine like cycling or walking to the shops, taking stairs instead of lifts, going for a walk with friends or family and playing games with the children.

If you work, build activity into your day by doing things like walking or cycling to work or meetings. Perhaps you can take advantage of work-based exercise facilities or corporate deals at local gyms. Making time for yourself mentally and emotionally, as well as getting enough quality sleep is

important so you can focus on relaxing your mind and recharging.

**Right now**

Learning simple relaxation techniques such as deep breathing can be an effective way of helping you deal with feelings of stress. Try these simple exercises that you can do anywhere if you are hit with stress:

- Deep breathing. Take a long slow breath in then very slowly breathe out. Really concentrate on your breathing – after a few times you should begin to feel more relaxed.
- Tensing and stretching your muscles. Rotate your neck to the side as far as is comfortable, and then relax. Repeat on the other side. Then try fully tensing your shoulder and back muscles for several seconds and relax completely.

**For good**

Plan time to relax even if it's just having a long bath or listening to music. Try and have a good night's sleep – adults usually need, on average, 7 to 8 hours. This may be difficult for some people, especially if you have children or work shifts. If this is the case aim to have at least 4 hours of sleep at the same time each day as this can help to keep your sleep clock regular. Research shows that people who are regularly active fall asleep faster and sleep longer and more deeply than people who do less activity.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Support for men who are victims of domestic abuse

Don't become the next statistic – take control and get help!

If you are experiencing domestic abuse, there are many organisations that can offer assistance to you and your family. Outreach services provide advice, support and information to anyone experiencing domestic abuse in their relationships.

***Domestic violence is a crime – in an emergency dial 999/112***

### **East Surrey Outreach Service**

Tandridge, Mole Valley and Reigate & Banstead.  
01737 771350

### **North West Surrey Outreach Service**

Woking, Runnymede and Surrey Heath.  
01483 776822

### **North Surrey Outreach Service**

Epsom & Ewell, Elmbridge and Spelthorne.  
01932 260690

### **Guildford Outreach Service**

Guildford area.  
01483 577392/01483 268661

### **Waverley Outreach Service**

Waverley area.  
01483 523205

### **Surrey Victim Support**

0845 3030 900

### **Men's Advice Line**

National helpline: confidential line for emotional and practical support for any man experiencing domestic violence and abuse, irrespective of sexuality.

0845 064 6800

[www.mensadvice.org.uk](http://www.mensadvice.org.uk)

### **RASASC – Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre**

Offers support to any survivor of rape and sexual abuse based in the Surrey area.

General Helpline: 01483 546400 (Mon-Sat)

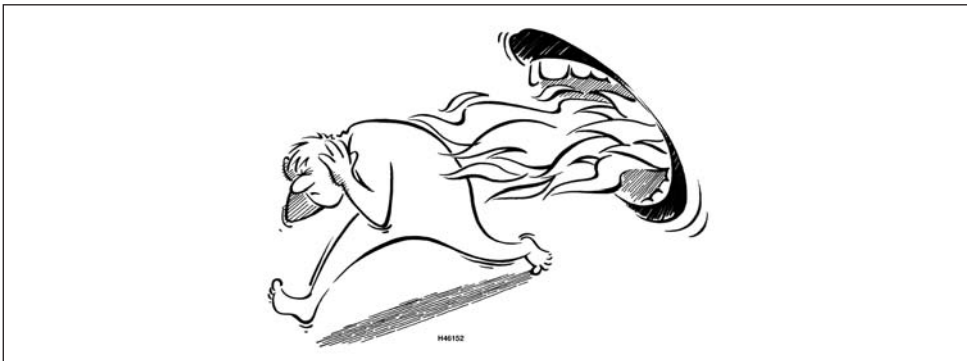
Male Helpline: 01483 568000 (Monday)

### **Broken Rainbow**

Support for gay men, bisexuals and transgender people suffering domestic abuse in the UK.

08452 60 44 60

[www.broken-rainbow.org.uk](http://www.broken-rainbow.org.uk)



## Support and help for perpetrators of domestic abuse

### Respect

Advice and information for men who are using violence in their relationships. Also have information about projects where you can go to get help to stop your violence. Details of support services and programmes for perpetrators.

0845 1228609

Email: [info@respect.uk.net](mailto:info@respect.uk.net)

[www.respect.uk.net](http://www.respect.uk.net)

### The TRYangle project

A project based in SE London for men who want to end violent and abusive behaviours towards a partner.

020 8855 7564

Email: [mvip@tryangle.org.uk](mailto:mvip@tryangle.org.uk)

[www.tryangle.org.uk](http://www.tryangle.org.uk)

### Everyman Project

National helpline for everyone concerned about violence. Counselling service for violent men wanting to change

020 7263 8884 (London based)

Email: [everymanproject@btopenworld.com](mailto:everymanproject@btopenworld.com)

[www.everymanproject.co.uk](http://www.everymanproject.co.uk)

### The Violence Initiative

Offering all who are violent a chance to change. Free services to perpetrators of violence. Available to anyone who can get to their base in North London.

020 8365 8220

Email: [admin@tviccv.org.uk](mailto:admin@tviccv.org.uk)

[www.tviccv.org](http://www.tviccv.org)

## Further information

### Mind

National association for mental health.

PO Box 277

Manchester

M60 3XN

Mindinfo Line: 0845 766 0163

E-mail: [info@mind.org.uk](mailto:info@mind.org.uk)

### NHS Direct

Provides confidential health advice and information 24 hours a day.

NHS Direct Interactive on digital satellite TV.

0845 46 47 (England and Wales)

08454 24 24 24 (Scotland)

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### Samaritans

Available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

08457 90 90 90

E-mail: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

*DOMESTIC VIOLENCE*

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## **How do you rate the Men's Health Forum Mini Manuals?**

We would love to have your feedback and comments on this manual – please use the following link to our website:

[www.menshealthforum.org.uk/minimanualssurvey](http://www.menshealthforum.org.uk/minimanualssurvey)

and there you will find a short questionnaire which should take a few minutes to complete. Thank you.