



YOUTH SAY  
**NO!**

# LIFE SUPPORT

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO YOUNG  
PEOPLE EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE



**Family and domestic violence  
is never OK. No one deserves  
to be abused.**

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This booklet contains helpful information about dating violence and family and domestic violence, and can be downloaded from [www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au](http://www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au)

# Are you worried someone you know is being hurt or abused?

You may know someone who is experiencing abuse in their family or in their personal relationship. They may seem withdrawn or perhaps you have noticed your friend doesn't go out much. You may be thinking that it's none of your business and you shouldn't interfere. Like 'what goes on in their relationship has nothing to do with me.'

But helping is not interfering. If people we know and care about are being hurt, we need to help. Sometimes people who are being abused feel very alone, and can often be too scared to talk about their situation because they have been threatened not to tell. Your support can make a huge difference to someone who is being abused.

Domestic violence is against the law and it is a criminal offence to threaten, harass or harm another person. It is wrong and you can report it.

# How do I know if it is abuse?

## WHAT IS FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Disagreements happen in every relationship. In respectful relationships, both people feel free to talk, make their own decisions, and just be themselves.

However, this is not the case in abusive relationships. An abusive person will control and dominate the other through physical harm, threats, pressure to have sex, financial control, emotional abuse and social isolation.

Sometimes, the victim is 'cut off' from friends to the extent that they often feel trapped in their relationship.

Family and domestic violence happens because the abuser wants to have total control over the other person. It is not caused by alcohol, drugs or stress- or anything else like that. It happens because the person being abusive chooses to behave this way.

Family and domestic violence is never the fault of the victim.

Some young people experience this type of abuse within their family. The abuse between mum and dad\* can make for an unhappy home life, and sometimes it's the parents or other family members inflicting hurt on the children. Living with family and domestic violence can be a scary and dangerous time.

## WHAT IS DATING VIOLENCE?

Adolescent dating violence is a form of family and domestic violence.

Dating violence is described as the physical, sexual, emotional and/or verbal abuse between young people who are now, or have been in the past, in a casual or serious relationship. All forms of abuse are wrong and many are against the law such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, threats of harm and stalking.

*\*Whenever you read the words 'mum and dad' this also means 'any other adult that is caring for you'.*

**If you are concerned about the immediate safety of someone then call the police on 000.**



## BEN'S STORY

"There's a kid that goes to my school who didn't talk much, he never hung around with anyone - a real loner. One day I got the courage to talk to him, to see if he wanted to hang out with us. He looked really nervous so I said 'come on, we are just sitting around talking, come join us'.

He was hesitant but followed me back to where my friends were sitting. My friends started to talk to him but he was really quiet, not saying much back.

I made a promise to myself that I would keep being friendly to him and hoped he would come out of his shell.

One day he came to school and didn't even speak to me. He just went off by himself again. I knew something was bothering him so I went and put my hand on his shoulder and said something like 'nothing is so bad you can't talk to a friend about it'. With that he got really upset so I sat with him to show that I really wanted to help him.

After what seemed like ages he asked me about my family and if we were happy. I said we were OK, just like any other family - I guess I'd never really thought that much about it. He said that not all families were happy, some were horrible to be part of and that his family was not happy like mine.

He told me about his mum and dad fighting all the time and how things would get thrown around the house and smashed, lots of yelling and screaming and that it felt like hell.

I couldn't imagine a family like that and it really made me think a lot about how some families might not be a happy or safe place to live. I asked him if he felt like talking to an adult like a youth worker or counsellor about what he had said, and I offered to go with him if he wanted me to. Next day he said he would see someone and did want me to come along. This made me feel good to know I could help in some small way.

He did get some help and his family did too. We are the best of mates now and hang out all the time. He often reminds me that if I hadn't offered my friendship and support, he might not have ever told anyone about what was happening in his family. This makes me feel great to know that it didn't take that much to help a mate.

# Some things to look out for

## Young people living with family and domestic violence are often:

- afraid of their parent/s and/or other family members
- tired, withdrawn and quiet – they don't want to mix with friends
- anxious or edgy to get home so they can help protect their mother or other family members
- afraid to go home at all.

## Young people experiencing dating violence may:

- feel afraid/terrified
- have changed the way they behave and interact with others
- avoid going out with their mates
- have been threatened by their boy/girlfriend
- have been pressured into doing sexual things
- have lost their confidence and seem depressed
- mention to you how jealous their partner is and what a bad temper they have.
- believe it is their fault and that they deserve the abuse, especially when their partner tells them so
- believe their partner loves them, and wants to stay to help them change
- have been threatened to never leave the relationship so they become scared and stay
- not have the confidence, strength or financial independence to leave
- think that if they leave, their boy/girlfriend may spread rumours about them.

## I don't understand... why don't they just break up with them?

It can be really hard to understand why someone would stay with their partner while being abused, especially when leaving seems to be the easy solution to the problem.

You might think that your friend is doing something to cause this to happen. It can be very hard to leave an abusive relationship and it's important to understand why people don't just leave. The abuse can often become much worse after separation so leaving an abusive relationship doesn't always mean an end to the violence.

## How you might feel

It can be a real shock to find out that one of your friends has been abused by a partner or family member. Some things your friend tells you may seem too awful to be real, or so bad you just can't imagine a person doing that to them. It is natural to feel shocked as well as angry, sad and scared.

It is VERY unlikely your friend has made up what they are telling you. They are telling you because they trust you. Believe what they are saying. Support your friend by listening and encouraging him/her to seek support from an adult they trust, even if this is only over the phone.

There is a list of useful contact numbers at the back of this booklet.

The strong feelings (like shock, fear and anger) you have in response to what your friend has told you can be overwhelming, which is why it is important to seek support for yourself as well as your friend. It might be helpful for you to also talk to an adult you trust about your concerns or call one of the numbers listed at the back of the booklet. Seeking support will help you feel better and will also mean you can support your friend in a safe and caring way.

If you have noticed some or all of these things happening to someone you know, there are ways you can help.

# What can I do to help?

Approach your friend in a sensitive and caring way, be thoughtful and tell your friend that you are really worried about what is going on. Tell them why you are worried. For example 'I've noticed you don't come out with us any more, now that you are going out with...'

## Here are some suggestions of how to help your friend:

- ▶ listen to and believe your friend, even if it is difficult
- ▶ encourage your friend to talk to an adult they trust
- ▶ let your friend know you think they are brave to be able to talk about their situation
- ▶ let your friend know that the abuse is not their fault and that they don't deserve it. Sometimes people experiencing abuse believe they are causing it to happen, because the abusive person tries to justify their actions by blaming the victim – let your friend know that this isn't the case.
- ▶ let your friend know that they are not alone, and that this sort of thing happens to lots of people.

## Try and avoid:

- ▶ gossiping about what your friend has told you. However, seeking help from a trusted adult or professional or calling one of the numbers at the back of this booklet is not gossiping - it's a good idea
- ▶ suggesting that your friend is causing this to happen. It is never the fault of the person experiencing the abuse
- ▶ confronting the abusive person because this can be dangerous. Instead tell an adult or someone you trust about your concerns
- ▶ working out the 'reasons' for the abuse. Instead focus on supporting your friend to be safe
- ▶ giving advice or telling your friend what they should do. Giving your friend information is more helpful so that they can make their own decisions.



**For young people living with family and domestic violence or dating violence it can be pretty full-on. Your support can make a difference.**



# Contacts

The following phone numbers and websites can help you if you feel unsafe, or if you just want to talk to someone or access more information. These places are there to make sure you are not hurt, so when you call they will be able to help protect you.

*Many of these are free and available 24/7.*

**Police** 131 444  
**Emergency Only** 000  
**From mobiles** 112  
**Crisis Care** 9223 1111  
**Country callers** 1800 199 008  
Free 24-hour telephone information and referral service for people in crisis needing urgent help.

**Kids Helpline** 1800 55 1800  
Free, confidential 24-hour telephone and online counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia.

**1800 MYLINE** 1800 695 463  
Free, confidential 24-hour respectful relationships advice line.

**1800 RESPECT** 1800 737 732  
Free, confidential 24-hour counselling for people affected by family or domestic violence or sexual assault.

**Lifeine** 13 11 14  
Free, confidential 24-hour counselling for people in crisis.

**Sexual Assault Resource Centre** 9340 1828  
**Country callers** 1800 199 888  
24-hour crisis line for people over the age of 13 years. Provides medical, forensic and counselling services to the Perth metropolitan area. Offers referral to a service near you.

**Women's Domestic Violence Helpline** 9223 1188  
**Country callers** 1800 007 339  
Free 24-hour support and counselling for women experiencing family and domestic violence.

**Men's Domestic Violence Helpline** 9223 1199  
**Country callers** 1800 000 599  
Free 24-hour telephone information, referral and counselling service for men to help them change their violent behaviour towards their partner.

## LANGUAGE SERVICES

**Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS)** 13 14 50  
24-hour national service for people who do not speak English or for English speakers communicating with them. Available to any person or organisation in Australia, offering access to 1750 contractors who speak over 170 languages and dialects.

**National Relay Service** 13 36 77  
24-hour national service for people with a hearing impairment or are deaf.

## LUKE'S STORY

“Every night after school was the same, everyone in the house anxious about dad coming home, not knowing if he would be in a good mood or a bad mood, trying to think of things to do to make him happy. Mum still wearing the bruises from the night before when dad went ballistic and started laying into her over nothing.

I got angry with her sometimes because she just put up with what dad dishes out without saying anything. I used to think that one day, I'll teach dad a lesson and he'll think twice about treating us this way, I swear.

I would always keep what's happening at home to myself, it's so embarrassing and if dad found out I said anything he would go mad. But it was hard. I'd see the other kids going to each other's houses and I know I could never invite anyone back to my house. I'd get asked to go along but I never could, I had to get home and help mum to prepare for dad's arrival. She has always relied on me to help her.

My friends stopped asking me out. I think they were sick of me saying no all the time. I used to get so angry - I just want a normal family. Is that too much to ask?

One day at school, out of the blue, one of my friends took me aside and asked me what was wrong. He said he was really worried about me and that anything I told him would be kept in trust, he wouldn't go telling every other kid at school.

I didn't know what to say at first but then he said 'Listen Luke. Nothing's ever that bad that you can't share it with a mate', and you know what? He was right. Once I could share some stuff with him I started to feel so much better, I'm even ready to talk to a professional about my situation so I can get some information to help me and my family decide what to do.”

# Websites

## [www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au](http://www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au)

A Western Australian website that provides information and support for young people experiencing family and domestic violence or supporting a friend or relative who is experiencing some form of abuse.

## [www.theline.org.au](http://www.theline.org.au)

### [www.facebook.com/theline](http://www.facebook.com/theline)

The Line is an initiative under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children and encourages healthy and respectful relationships by challenging and changing attitudes and behaviours that support violence.

## [www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/our-publications/booklets/sex-love-and-other-stuff](http://www.dvrcv.org.au/knowledge-centre/our-publications/booklets/sex-love-and-other-stuff)

Sex, Love and Other Stuff - Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria. Information for young men on respectful relationships.

## [www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com)

Provides information and assistance for teenagers living in homes where there is violence or abuse.

## [lovegoodbadugly.com](http://lovegoodbadugly.com)

Advice and stories about dating and relationships for young people to help them work out where their relationship is at, from the personal experience of other young people who have been in a similar position.

## [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

Initiative of the Inspire Foundation and sponsored by state government and corporate business. An interactive site that inspires people to help themselves through tough times, with fact sheets and stories on safety in a relationship and in families.

## [www.itstimewetalked.com.au/young-people](http://www.itstimewetalked.com.au/young-people)

Seeing porn might seem normal. But porn is not reality and it can impact in a range of ways that aren't all good.

## [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)

Kids Helpline national web based counselling and information service aimed at young people aged 5 to 25 years.

## [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner

The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner is a one-stop-shop for online safety. The Office provides Australians a range of up-to-date information and resources, coupled with a comprehensive complaints system to assist children who experience serious cyberbullying.

## [www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)

Help, information, stories and support for children and young people experiencing violence in their family or relationship.





Government of **Western Australia**  
Department for **Child Protection**  
and **Family Support**

[WWW.YOUTHSAYNO.WA.GOV.AU](http://WWW.YOUTHSAYNO.WA.GOV.AU)