

# Domestic and Family

## Violence

### Information Kit



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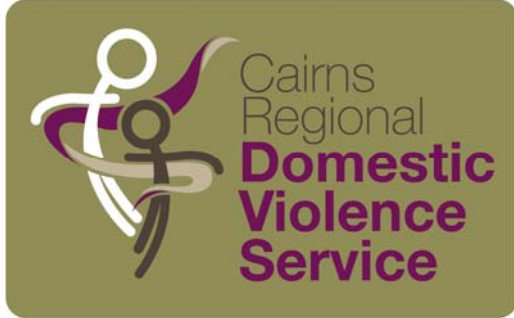
[www.dvcairns.org](http://www.dvcairns.org)

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# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: SOURCES OF HELP



In an **EMERGENCY**, don't let anyone's life be placed in danger, including your own. In an emergency, call the POLICE on 000.

For information and other practical assistance ring the free state-wide Domestic Violence Telephone Service on 1800 811 811. The TTY number is 1800 812 225. This service operates 24 hours, seven days a week. The purpose is to assist all people affected by Domestic Violence. Included is a telephone counselling and referral service to women's refuges and other community agencies for people in situation of Domestic Violence.

## **Useful Contact Numbers:**

Emergency (Police/Ambulance) 000  
Police – Cairns (07) 4030 7000  
Shelters/Refuges 1800 811 811  
A & TSI Shelter (07) 4033 1900  
Legal Aid Queensland 1300 651 188  
Lifeline 131114 (24 hrs)  
Men's Information Line 1800 600 636

**24 Hour state-wide  
Domestic Violence Telephone Service  
1800 811 811 (Free call -Queensland  
only)**

## **Women's Refuges**

Women's Refuges are a safe place for women and children escaping domestic violence. Remember, domestic violence does not just refer to physical abuse. Domestic violence includes emotional, sexual, social or financial abuse.

Refuges provide a range of services including information and personal support, a place to explore your options and make decisions about the future. They try to create a homelike situation where rules are kept to a minimum. Residents are free to come and go. Usually each family will be allocated a bedroom. Cooking and living areas are generally shared with other residents.

No cash is needed to enter a women's refuge. Refuge staff provide for immediate needs and will assist residents to sort out their financial situation and entitlement to benefits.

In Queensland, there are 45 women's refuges, including 12 specifically providing services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. These refuges are jointly funded by the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments. Refuges are now located in all major provincial centres.

Refuges generally keep their addresses secret to ensure the safety of residents. IF YOU WANT TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF GOING TO A REFUGE YOU CAN PHONE THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TELEPHONE SERVICE ON 1800 811 811.

## Am I In a Domestic Violence Relationship?

### Domestic and family violence checklist

If your partner or a family member is showing any signs on this list then you may be experiencing one or more forms of domestic violence.

1. Is your partner jealous of your friends, family and even pets?
2. Do you discourage people from phoning you at home when your partner is there because they resent it and make talking difficult or uncomfortable?
3. Does your partner use bodily or facial expressions or noises to show extreme anger and loss of control, in order to frighten you?
4. Does your partner threaten to 'punish you' or 'teach you a lesson' if you do not comply with their demands?
5. Does your partner suggest that you are 'stupid' or 'crazy' if you disagree with them?
6. Does your partner apologise and say the abuse is simply a sign of deep love or fear of losing your love?
7. Does your partner claim to know the 'right' way to do things, and that you do not know what is 'right'?
8. Do you often feel like you are walking on egg shells?
9. Does your partner keep guns, knives or other weapons close at hand?
10. Do you at times feel overpowered by your partner's presence whether they are with you or not?

If you believe you are experiencing any of the above, are unsure what to do and wish to talk confidentially about it then call Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service on 4033 6100 during business hours.

In an emergency call 1800 811 811-- 24 hours a day.

## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic and family violence occurs when one person in a relationship uses violent and abusive tactics to maintain power and control over the other person in a relationship. People who experience these acts of abuse or violence often feel fearful and unsafe. Domestic and family violence occurs between people in a range of domestic relationships including spousal relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships.

In relationships where domestic and family violence occurs the violent behaviours can include:

- **physical** abuse (including slapping, hitting, punching, pushing, biting, kicking)
- **threatening** to hurt you, your relatives, friends or work colleagues in some way **threatening** to stop providing care for you if you don't do what you are told, for example if you don't hand over your Centrelink payment. This sometimes happens to people with an illness, disability or impairment who rely on another person to care for them
- **damaging property** such as furniture, the house or pets in order to frighten and intimidate you
- **emotional** abuse (making you feel worthless, criticising your personality, your looks, the way you dress, constantly putting you down, threatening to hurt you, your children or your pets)
- **verbal** abuse (including yelling, shouting, name-calling, and swearing at you)
- **sexual** abuse (forcing or pressuring you to have sex or participate in any sexual activities that you don't want to)
- **financial** abuse (taking control of the money, not giving you enough money to survive on, forcing you to hand over your money, not letting you have a say in how it is spent)
- **social** abuse (controlling where you go, not letting you see your friends or family)
- **depriving** you of the necessities of life such as food, shelter, medical care and the company of other people such as your family and friends
- **spiritual** abuse (forcing you to attend religious activities against your wishes, prohibiting you from participating in the religious practices of your choice)
- **Stalking** (constantly following you by foot or car, constantly calling you by phone, text message and email, or staying outside your house or workplace). Stalking is a criminal offence in Queensland
- Doing similar things which upset you and make you fear for your safety.

Generally, an argument occurs over a disagreement or differing views about a specific issue. During the argument, voices can be raised in heated discussions, but there is still a level of respect and equality between partners.

Domestic and family violence occurs when one person in a relationship uses tactics aimed at achieving control and dominance. In this situation, the abusive person will seek to 'win' the argument by not allowing the other person to express their view or coercing them, through the use of violence and abuse, to give in to the abusive person's opinion. The essential difference is the lack of equality and respect between the two people, with one person maintaining control over the other.

People from all types of backgrounds can use violent and abusive behaviours towards the people they are in domestic relationships with. The problem of domestic and family violence is not confined to any particular social or ethnic group.

While there may be a whole range of things that you and the other person disagree about, it is important that these differences are resolved in a way that does not involve violence and abuse. It is important that your behaviour does not cause the other person to feel fearful and unsafe.

# The Power and Control Wheel

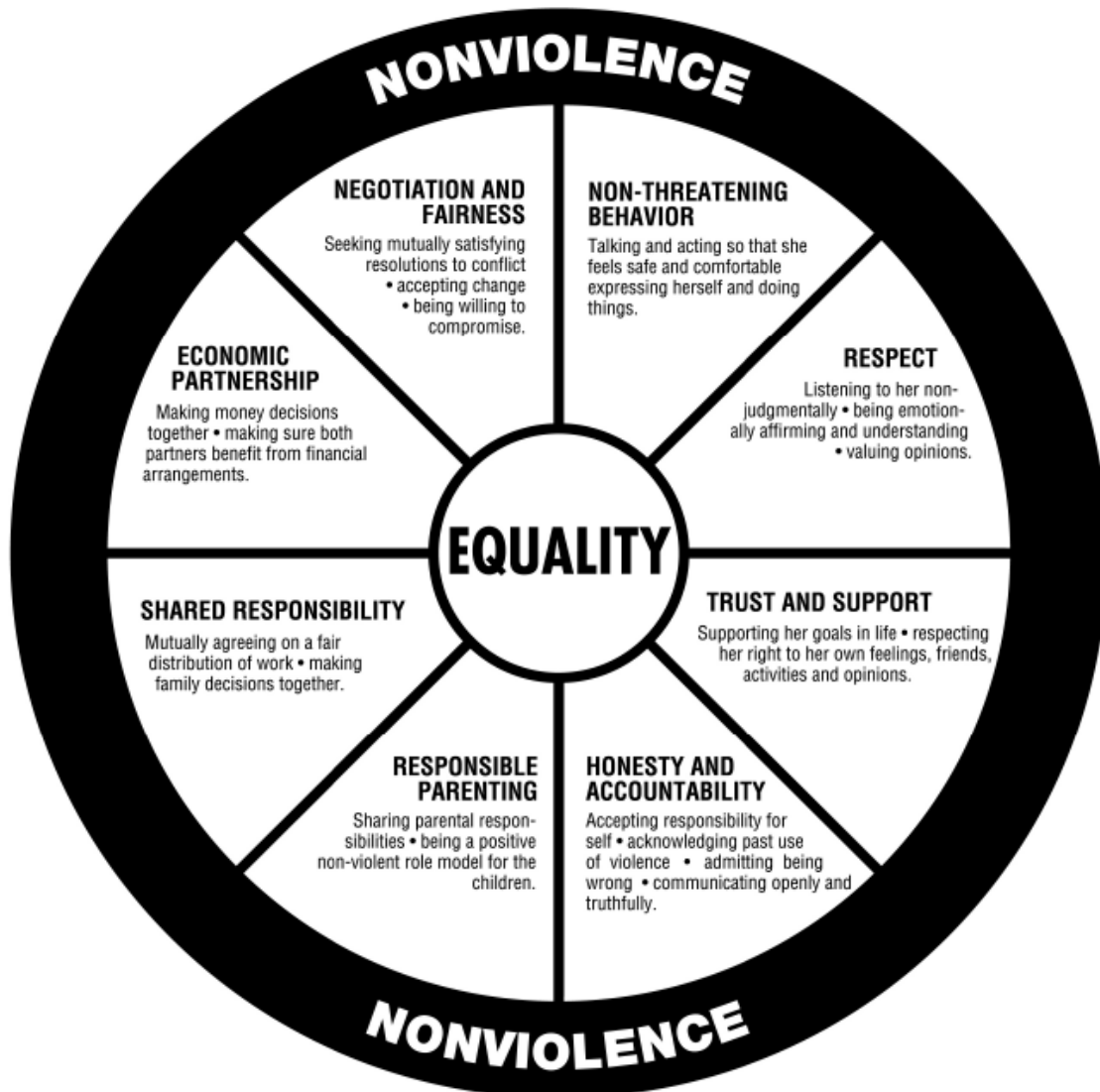
The power and control wheel below provides examples of abusive tactics that may be used by the abuser to assert power and control over their partner. Not all of these tactics may be used by the abuser but most abused women can identify with some of, if not all, of them.



**DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT**  
 202 East Superior Street  
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802  
 218-722-2781  
[www.duluth-model.org](http://www.duluth-model.org)

# The Equality Wheel

The Equality wheel is made up of the behaviours that occur in a healthy and equal relationship.



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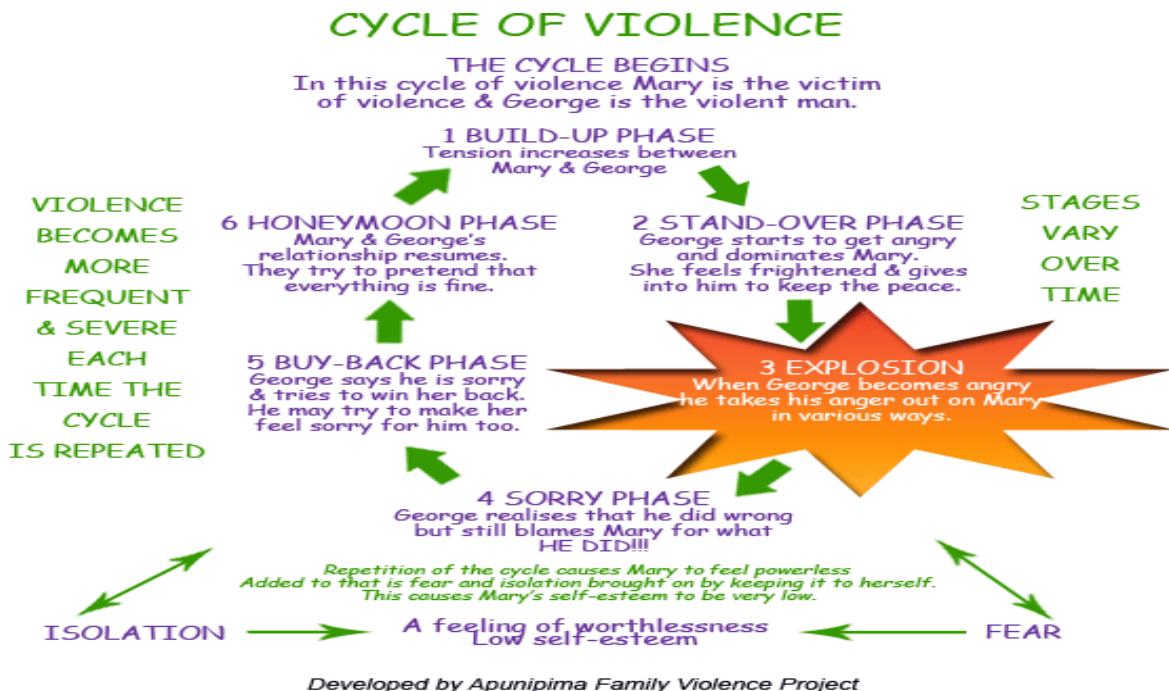
# Cycle of Domestic Violence

Within a Domestic Violence relationship there is a cycle that both the victim and the perpetrator find themselves in. This cycle is called the Cycle of Violence.

The cycle contains six phases:

1. **Build Up Phase** - During this phase, tension begins to increase, often described by victims as feeling as though they are walking on egg shells.
2. **Stand Over Phase** - The perpetrator begins to get angry and dominates the victim.
3. **Explosion Phase** - The perpetrator abuses the victim. This may be physical violence, verbal abuse or any other form of abuse.
4. **Sorry Phase** - During this Phase the perpetrator realises that he did wrong, but will blame the victim for his actions saying things like "I'm sorry that I hit you, but you shouldn't have done ..."
5. **Buy Back Phase** - The perpetrator tries to win back his partner. During this phase he may try to make the victim feel sorry for him.
6. **Honeymoon Phase** - The relationship continues and they try to pretend everything is good again. There is usually underlying tension during this phase as the victim is afraid that it will happen again.

The Cycle of Violence continues and over time the victim will find themselves feeling isolated, fearful and having feelings of low self-worth. As the cycle continues, the abuse in the explosion phase will escalate and the cycle will go faster. Eventually parts of the cycle may disappear altogether, these are usually the honeymoon phase and the buy back phase. When the cycle becomes more frequent with abuse escalating and phases missing, the victim is at a high risk of serious harm.



# How do I Keep Myself Safe?

## Getting Help: Safety Planning

If you are still in the relationship these suggestions may help you be able to leave quickly if you are in danger.

**The safety of yourself and your family is paramount.**

1. Think of a safe place to go if an argument occurs - avoid rooms with no exits (bathroom), or rooms with weapons (kitchen).
2. Decide where you will go if you need a safe place away from the house.
3. Think about and make a list of safe people to contact if you feel threatened or in danger.
4. Decide what arrangements you will make to ensure the safety of your children.
5. Save some money for a taxi fare or bus fare for emergency transport to a safe place.
6. Keep an extra key to your house and car.
7. Make a list of emergency and helpful phone numbers, and keep it with you at all times.
8. Establish a 'code word' or 'sign' so that family, friends, teachers or co-workers know when to call for help.
9. Pack all of the medications you need.
10. Know where all of your important papers and records are so that you can find them in a hurry. Important papers you should take include social security documents, birth certificates for you and your children, your marriage license, leases or deeds in your name or both yours and your partner's names, your bank cards and bank statements, insurance policies, proof of income for you and your spouse (pay slips), any documentation of past incidents of abuse (photos, police reports, medical records), and residency documents, etc.
11. Consider keeping spare clothing, medications, important papers, keys, and some cash at a friend's house. Alternatively, hide these in a bag in a safe place such as on top of a cupboard or under a bed.
12. Practice travelling to the location that you have chosen as a safe place.
13. Make a list of other arrangements you should consider:
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....
  - .....

- .....
- .....
- .....

14. Remember you have the right to live without fear and violence.

If you have left the relationship:

1. Consider changing your phone number including a silent number.
2. Screen calls through using an answering machine.
3. Save and document all contacts, messages, injuries or other incidents involving the perpetrator. Commence a dairy of events and ensure all conversations are accurately recorded.
4. Change locks, if the perpetrator has a key (deadlocks are preferable).
5. Consider installing security screens on doors and windows.
6. Avoid staying alone.
7. Plan how to get away if confronted by an abusive partner.
8. If you have to meet your ex-partner, do it in a public place.
9. Vary your routine.
10. Notify school and work contacts.
11. Call 1800 811 811 if you need to access a shelter for women.



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# How can the law help me to stay safe?

## Domestic Violence Protection Orders

The Magistrates Court can make a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) if it is felt that you need protection. To be granted a DVPO you will have to satisfy several criteria that court needs to be able to make an order under the legislation. The first criterion is that you have a relationship that fits in with the legislation.

The types of relationships are:

- **Spousal** - Married, Married/Separated, Divorced, De facto, De facto separated and biological parents of a child of the relationship.
- **Intimate Personal Relationship** - Dating, have dated, engaged, were engaged and betrothed or were betrothed. To fit this relationship criteria the court needs to believe that the lives of both parties have become enmeshed e.g. the actions of one party will affect the life of the other party.
- **Family Relationship** - Related by blood or through marriage. Also includes someone who it is reasonable to regard as a relative. Both parties must be over 18 years of age.
- **Informal Care** - where one person is dependant on another person who helps the person in activity of daily living. The care must be required because of a disability, illness or impairment. Arrangement should be informal and not involve payment or a fee, except Carer's pension.

You will also need to be able to show that an act of violence (see page 2 for examples of domestic violence) has occurred recently, has happened in the past and is likely to occur again in the future. You should be able to display a pattern of behaviour from the recent incident and the history of violence. This is part of the application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order.

On page 12, there is a flow chart of the process. This chart displays the process involved with getting an order. It is a court process. There are several stages to applying for an order. The first stage is the application stage; the next is lodging the application with your Court House. The Court will give you the date for this appearance. The police will be given a copy of the application to give to the respondent (the person committing the violence). When you go to court the first time it will be for mention, meaning that the respondent will tell the court their thoughts about the application, whether they agree (consent) to it or not (contest) or would like to seek legal advice. If the respondent has not been served at the first mention the court will adjourn the matter until the respondent has been served. The court may make a Temporary Protection Order if the court believes

that you are risk of physical injury or serious property damage, this temporary order will take effect when the respondent is served until the next court date. If the respondent contests the application (disagrees) this means that the court will adjourn the application for a hearing date. During the hearing both parties give evidence and both are cross-examined. The magistrate will then rule whether the order be granted or not.

### **What will an order mean for me?**

A Domestic Violence Protection Order will mean that the respondent has conditions made by the court that they must be of good behaviour towards you and not commit further acts of violence against you. You can also apply for extra conditions on your order prohibiting the respondent from coming to your house, work or contacting you. If the respondent is continuing their behaviour it is important to contact the police so that they are able to charge the respondent with breaching the order.

### **What will an order mean for the respondent?**

A Domestic Violence Protection Order is **NOT** a criminal matter; it will only become a criminal matter if the respondent breaches the order. The order will not affect employment or blue cards. It will affect Weapons Licences; the respondent is not able to hold a weapons licence for five years after the making of an order.

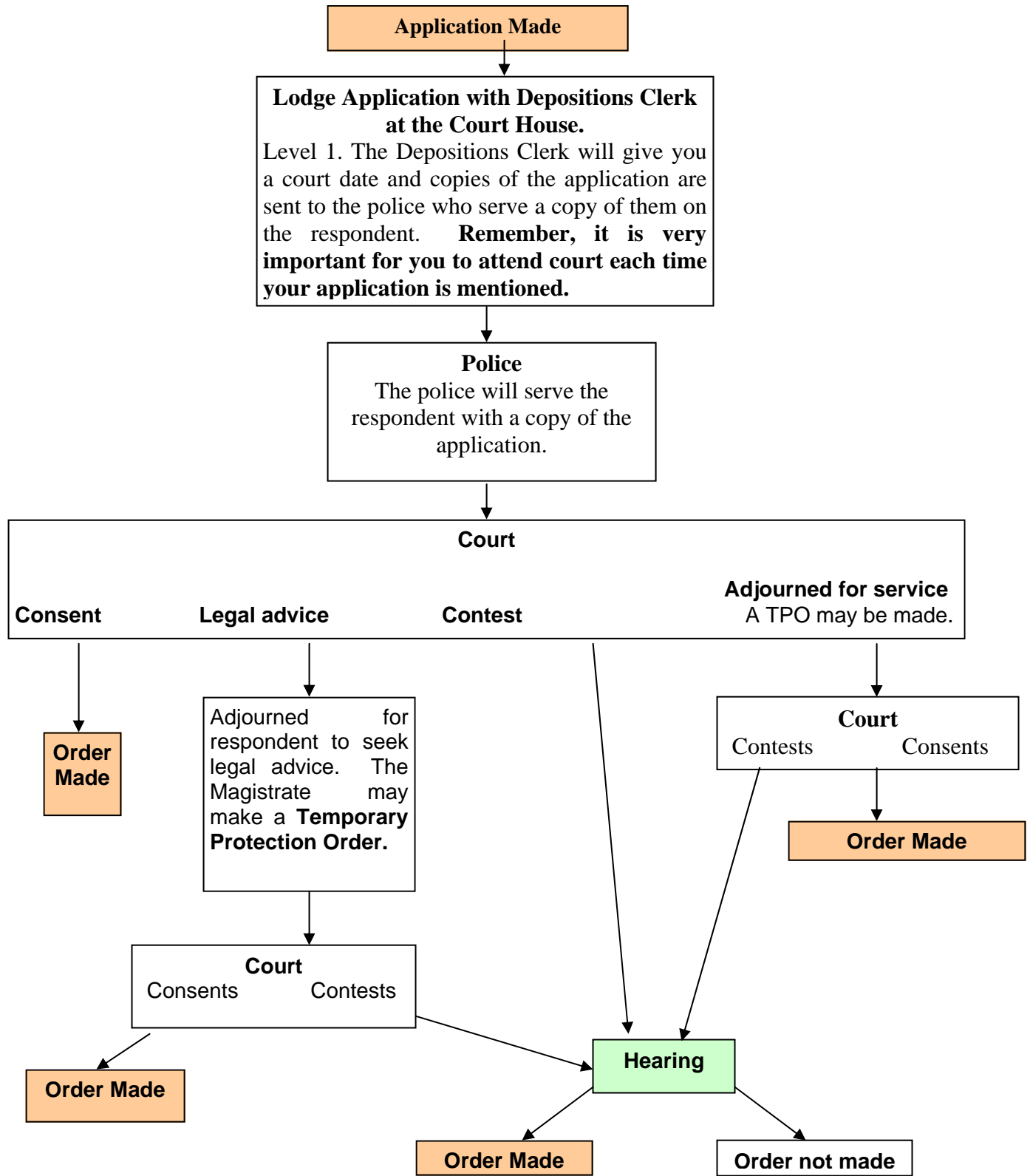
### **Who Can Apply for a Domestic Violence Protection Order?**

The police can apply for an order on your behalf if they attend an incident and feel that domestic violence has occurred.

You can make application for a protection order; you can pick up the forms from the Court House.

Services can assist you with making an application. Our service for example, can assist people to make application for an order.

# Process of Getting a Domestic Violence Order



## **Causes of Domestic Violence**

There is no single known cause for Domestic Violence. It is believed to be generational, in that men that have lived in an abusive home are more likely to become violent in their future relationships. The main cause is that the perpetrator wants to have all the power and control within the relationship. They will see that violent behaviour allows them to get what they want and their needs met.

Domestic Violence has been an accepted part of society for many years, it was only in 1989 that marital rape and domestic violence was recognised as a crime in Queensland. Men expected women to be their possessions and the law agreed with this until these changes were brought into place. One man described his expectations of marriage as being "I remember being at work and expecting to come home and find the house clean, dinner on the table and my wife with her pants off waiting for me" (Gondolf 1987, pg 7). This quote displays the expectations that many men have been brought up with regarding what married life is like.

Domestic violence is often accepted in our society as a 'normal' part of a relationship and men sometimes have to show the wife who is the boss in the marriage and if the wife does not act in the correct manner it is then OK to abuse your wife. An example of this is in British Common Law, which is where most Australian laws were derived from; men were given the right to beat their wives with an instrument as long as it wasn't any thicker than their thumb. In today's society it is illegal to commit acts of domestic violence, but you may still have police that still believe that domestic violence is a 'domestic dispute' and not treat it as a crime.

Courts may not award severe consequences for committing acts of domestic violence. The community usually does not ostracize domestic violence perpetrators. There is also a belief among many groups that marriage is for life, parents need to live together to raise children, and this all adds to the continuation of the acceptability of domestic violence within our society.

There are many myths surrounding domestic violence and these myths add to the acceptability of domestic violence in our society. Some of these myths will be explored in the following pages.

# Myths Surrounding Domestic Violence

## Myth: Drug and Alcohol Use Causes Domestic Violence

There is no evidence that alcohol or drugs cause domestic violence. The perpetrator's need to have power and control over their partners is the cause of domestic violence. Drug and alcohol usage may exacerbate domestic violence, but it is certainly not the cause. Domestic violence is made up of multiple behaviours that all lead to the perpetrator having power and control over their partner. Not all domestic violence occurs when the perpetrator is drunk or affected by drugs, many incidents of domestic violence occur when the perpetrator is sober. Alcohol and other drugs lessen the senses and therefore make it difficult for perpetrators to be aware of how hard they are hitting. "More Booze causes more bruises" (Gondolf & Russel, 1987). Although many people say that the violence occurs when the perpetrator is affected by drugs and alcohol, there are usually other behaviours happening when the perpetrator is sober.

## Myth: "If it was that bad she'd just leave"

Because of the nature of domestic violence it is often very difficult for the woman to leave the violent relationship. Usually a woman in a violent relationship will find themselves without support because they have been isolated by the perpetrator. Within domestic violence the perpetrator has the full power and control; this will often include the finances, therefore making it hard for the woman to leave. Victims are also afraid of what the consequences of them leaving the relationship will be, the perpetrator may have told her that he will kill her if she leaves or kill himself. There are numerous reasons that would make it difficult for a woman to leave a violent relationship and these include that she may have to leave her family home with her children, while he continues to stay in the house.



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**Myth: Violent men cannot control their violence.**

Perpetrators of Domestic Violence can control their violence, they control their violence while away from home, and they usually don't go around abusing everyone that makes them angry. Usually perpetrators are able to be charming and charismatic out in public. Perpetrators will say that they couldn't control their anger and they will blame the victim for their actions. This allows the perpetrator to take no responsibility for their actions. Perpetrators are very controlled in their violence in that they will usually hit the victim in places that can be hidden. For example, hitting the victim's body, instead of the face so that the victim is able to wear concealing clothes to cover the bruising.

**Myth: Abused Women deserve to get beaten. They provoke the abuse by nagging or other annoying behaviours.**

There is NO excuse for abuse. Many women describe incidents of violence happening "out of the blue". Many victims of domestic violence will try to modify their behaviours to avoid being abused, but will still end up being abused. Perpetrators will describe their partner as a "nag" and will say that this is why they have abused their partner. A lot of the time, the victim has tried to get their thoughts across to the perpetrator and because of the powerful position of the perpetrator; they have felt that needed to repeat this thought until they are heard. Violence is a choice and the perpetrator chooses to use violence against their partner during an incident instead of taking action to prevent the abuse e.g. walking away.

**Myth: Domestic Violence only happens in within poor or working class families.**

Domestic violence occurs across all social-economic groups. This myth developed because people on low incomes are more likely to come to the attention of official agencies. Those families with access to more resources are sometimes better able to hide the violence.

**Myth: Violent men are mentally ill or have psychopathic personalities.**

Clinical studies of men who abuse their partners do not support this view. The vast majority of violent men are not suffering from mental illness and could not be described as psychopaths. Most perpetrators present as ordinary respectable men who are very much in control. They are represented in all occupations and social classes and the violence is usually manifest only within their relationships with their female partner and children.

# The effects of Domestic Violence on Children

Children are affected by domestic and family violence even if they have not seen the abuse or violence. Children react in a variety of ways; they may show signs that they are affected by the domestic and family violence, or they may keep these signs and their feelings inside. It is important to listen to children and watch for warning signs of effects on a child's physical or emotional health.

Some of the ways children may react include:

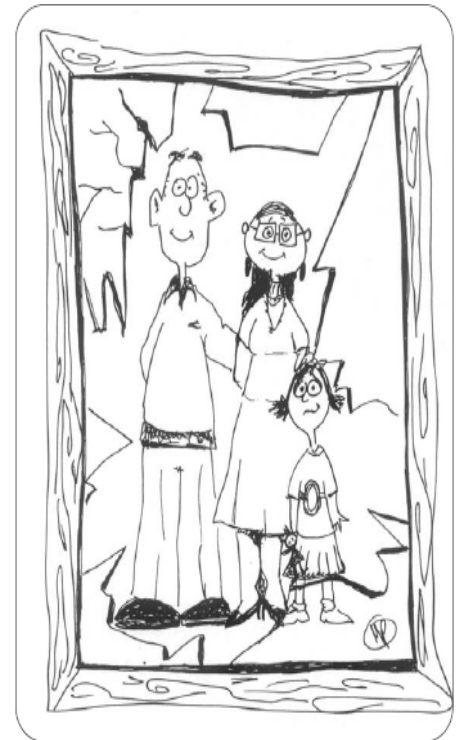
- copying the abusive or violent behaviour
- Trying to intervene to stop the abuse. This is how some children become injured during domestic and family violence
- being stunned into a terrified silence by what they see
- blaming themselves
- being frustrated, angry and depressed
- wetting the bed
- being nervous and withdrawn
- displaying psychosomatic illnesses including unexplained headaches, asthma and stuttering
- running away from home
- attempting suicide
- Abusing alcohol and substances.

Research shows that children who are involved in domestic and family violence are affected in many ways. They don't need to see it to be affected.

Violent behaviour is also teaching children inappropriate messages about abuse and violence and the way to treat people in their family, those they care for, or people with a disability, illness or impairment.

Children may learn that:

- the only way to cope with stress and pressure is through the use of abuse and violence
- using violence is an appropriate way to solve problems
- It is okay to use violence to get what you want.



*My child just pretends to smile, the violence has hurt her too.*

**Marta Ponti & Robyn Edwards 2004**

## Statistics

- 23% of Australian women who have ever been married or in a *de facto* relationship have experienced violence by their partner (ABS 1996, p. 50).
- 95% of all DV assaults are committed by men against women.
- 1.1 million Australian women have experienced violence by a previous partner, including during and after the relationship (ABS 1996, p.52).
- 42% of women have experienced violence during a pregnancy; 20% for the first time when pregnant (ABS 1996, p. 57).
- 35% of women who experienced violence from their partner during periods of separation (ABS 1996, p. 57).
- 42% of women who had been in a previous relationship reported violence by a previous partner (ABS 1996, p. 51).
- 12% of women, who reported violence by their current partner at some stage during the relationship, said they were currently living in fear (ABS 1996, p. 51).

Jenny Mouzos and Catherine Rushforth analysed the victim-offender relationships for almost 4500 homicides that occurred in Australia over a 13 year period from 1989 to 2002.

The study found that:

- on average there were 129 family homicides each year, 77 related to domestic disputes;
- that killings between partners/spouses accounted for 60 per cent of all family homicides in Australia, with women accounting for 75 per cent of the victims, and men comprising the majority of the killers;
- that a quarter of the intimate homicides occurred after the partners had separated or divorced.

# Some Stories from Survivors of Domestic Violence

From the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre Website.

## Anna's story

### What happened:

My first husband was mentally and physically abusive and had a sexual addiction problem. I knew before we married about a family history of abuse. Once before our marriage, he threatened to kill us both in the car. I thought his behaviour would change once he moved away from his family, and for a very short time it did. Before I gave birth to our first child, twice he again threatened to kill us in the car. After I gave birth, his mental abuse of manipulation, questioning my fidelity and stalking me escalated. After the birth of our second child, his sexual addiction was ignited and he began a series of affairs. Depression robbed me of my ready smile. It was like walking on eggshells, but I loved him.

His continual physical abuse ceased the day he belted me so hard I lost partial hearing in one ear and then he raped me. Afterward he felt remorseful and I was grateful for the cessation of physical abuse. Within months, I saw my children withdraw from their father. In the final futile weeks I remained with him, I narrowly stopped him from a sexual advance on our daughter, and watched in horror as he threw a knife at our son.

### How I coped:

I spoke up for myself and pointed out that his behaviour was intolerable. I began undertaking activities to relax myself such as going to the gym, swimming and learning meditation techniques.

### How the situation changed:

My children and I all survived and undertook counselling after I demanded my husband leave the house for good and I began divorce proceedings one year later.

### What helped:

I spoke with a psychologist who was a work colleague at the time. He encouraged me to understand that I had a lot to offer, and that I should no longer accept manipulation, physical abuse, and intimidation.

## **What I would say to someone who is being abused:**

It's easy to say "GET OUT", but I know what it feels like wanting to give a fifth, sixth, and seventh chance. There is a song that Brian Cadd recorded in the 70s and its integral words were: "If it hurts to say his name, then baby let go." It's as simple as that. You deserve to be happy, loved and fulfilled.

It took me a lot of false starts, but eventually I stepped out of an abusive relationship. I am now re-married and enjoying every minute of what a real marriage should be. Don't waste another minute of your life trying to change an abuser.

Please, anyone out there presently in any form of abusive relationship, once a guy behaves in an abusive way more than a few times, it's not just a mistake brought on by his own stresses. Take that step and move on before it's too late. Such a decision can be hard but taking a positive step to free yourself is certainly worth it. You will need time to heal the hurt, but over time you will feel like yourself again. Make sure you go out with friends after a break up, as this will only do you good.

### **Julie's story**

#### **What happened**

At first my boyfriend was so considerate, and overly friendly. Once we started dating he started to accuse me of cheating on him, and would call me a 'slut'. He would repeatedly call to "check-up" on me. When he saw me dancing with a male friend, he grabbed my arm and I fell down a flight of steps trying to get away from him. One night, he held me down and wouldn't let me leave his house.

The worst part was that I went along with everything. He would break up with me, and then I would take him back. He blamed me for his behavior, saying that if I was trustable, he wouldn't have to check on me. He would ask my friends if I was trustworthy and would check to see if my car was at work. Many times women believe that they would recognize abuse, I believed that. I am an educated woman, from a good family, with a job, and a secure future. I never thought I would end up in an abusive relationship. It was so subtle - he stole my self worth.

#### **How I coped**

After we broke up, he started to stalk me. I made two police reports against him and took him to court for a restraining order. I didn't get it. He followed me everywhere I went, sent lewd messages, threatened me. Six months later, he damaged my car. It has been a year, my friends have been a good support and a local abuse support service has helped.

## **How the situation changed**

I avoid places I know he goes. About every couple months he sends a lewd message, but I have been able to return to a normal life. I am careful about going places by myself. I have finally realized that I am not all the things he called me, and that I am lovable. I am in a healthy relationship now that is full of respect.

## **What helped me**

He had convinced me that I was crazy and unlovable. I started going to the support service and became educated on the cycle of abuse. I saw so clearly that it wasn't my fault. A support group has shown me that I am not alone. Friends have stuck by me- they were there-they saw what happened.

## **What I would say to others**

It is so easy to deny. I did not want to admit that I could be in an mentally abusive relationship - I wanted to believe that he loved me. If friends and family tell you that there is something wrong with your relationship - really look at what they are saying. Don't give up your freedom or your self-worth. You deserve to be happy and to feel good about your self. It may be hard to leave - but it will always be worth. Don't be afraid to seek legal help or counselling. You are worth it!

## **Sallie's story**

### **What happened:**

I was once in an emotionally abusive relationship. He changed once we moved in together - before that I thought he was a really nice guy, but unfortunately his pattern of behaviour changed. I hope that this stage of manipulation would pass and I certainly found out how naive I was. The type that didn't know the meaning of a little bit of privacy, always looking through my things, questioning my activities, questioning me about my past, consistently brought me down about my weight, compared me to his ex-wife, called me names and his actions made me feel wrong about everything. He'd even ignore me as soon as he walked through the front door, not even a hello, - it was like I didn't exist except when he wanted something. Falling in love doesn't mean the guy is right for you, because any form of abusive should be taken very seriously. Eventually, I withdrew and kept everything to myself and I even started to get depressed, at one time I didn't know who I was anymore.

**How I coped:**

I learnt to speak my mind and pointed out to him I wouldn't put up with this sort of abusive behaviour for too much longer. I took up activities to relax myself, going for a walks every day, meditation and talked to a close friend about it. Talking to someone else helped me cope because keeping it inside can do damage. Even speaking to a family member can work wonders.

**How the situation changed:**

The situation changed once I decided to end the relationship and promised myself to never look back. I'm pleased to say we broke up, and once he found out I started a new relationship, he came knocking on my door asking for a second chance. He even proposed, saying he had changed, but I knew his past actions could be repeated and so I said no.

**What helped me to get stronger:**

I made myself get stronger. I structured my pattern of thinking to not tolerate my partner's manipulation and intimidation any longer. Writing my thoughts and feelings down on paper like a diary helped in the development of strength.

**What I would say to someone who is being abused:**

Please, anyone out there presently in any form of abusive relationship, once a guy behaves in an abusive way more than a few times, it's not just a mistake brought on by his own stresses, it's what's called character. Take that step and move on before it's too late. Such a decision can be hard but taking a positive step to free yourself is certainly worth it. You will need time to heal the hurt, but over time you will feel like yourself again. Make sure you go out with friends after a break up, as this will only do you good.

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