

# For Men Affected by Domestic Violence

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*Originally produced with Barking and Dagenham PCT*

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(010-12357)

ISBN: 978 1 906121 76 1

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Printed by J. H. Haynes & Co. Ltd., Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7JJ, England.

### Haynes Publishing

Sparkford, Yeovil, Somerset BA22 7JJ, England

### Haynes North America, Inc

861 Lawrence Drive, Newbury Park, California 91320, USA

### Haynes Publishing Nordiska AB

Box 1504, 751 45 UPPSALA, Sweden

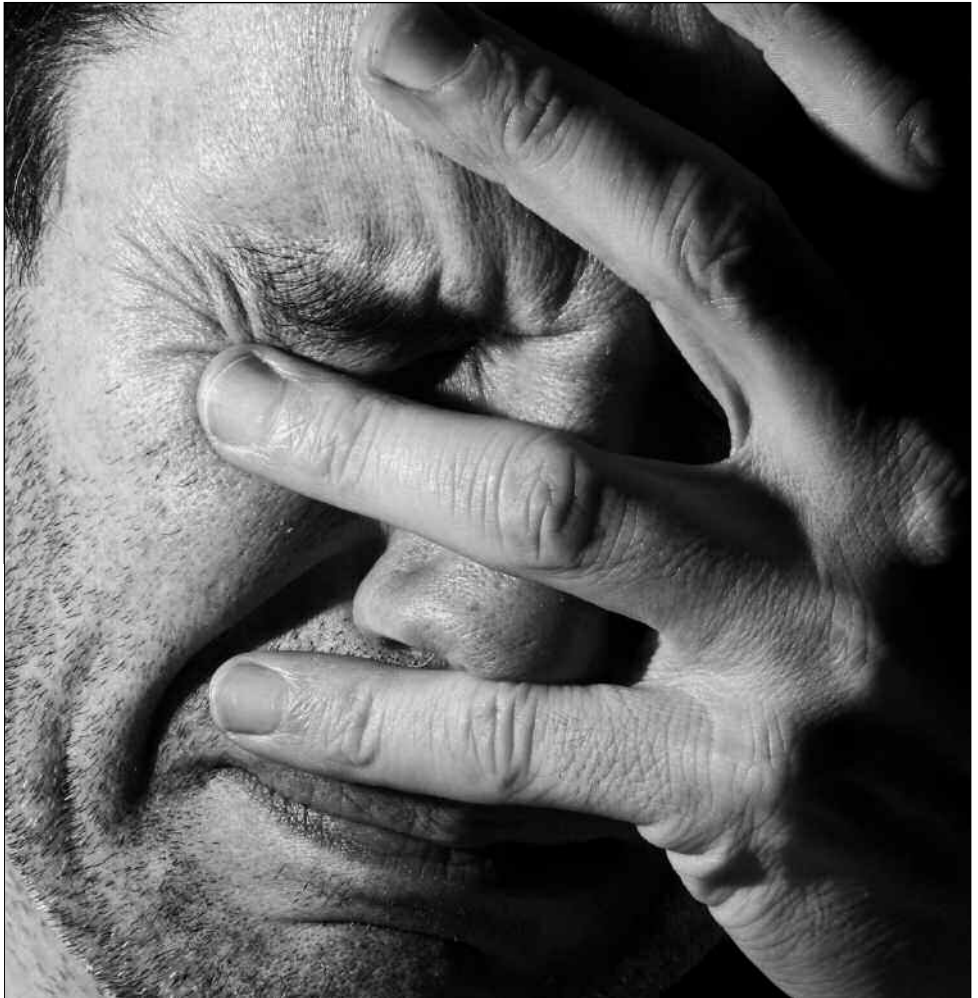
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## Introduction

Domestic violence is often talked about in whispers and behind closed doors but it is important to recognise that men experience domestic violence, both as victims and perpetrators.

This booklet aims to provide an introduction to domestic violence and help

both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence to make the first step towards breaking free. This section of the booklet is aimed at men who are suffering abuse; if you feel you may be abusing someone then you may want to read the other section of the booklet first.



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## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is described by the Home Office as 'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are or have been in a relationship together, or between family members, regardless of gender or sexuality.'

Some organisations use the term 'violence', some use 'abuse'; in this booklet the terms are interchangeable.

There are lots of different forms of domestic violence but basically it is the misuse of power and exercise of control of one adult over another. Domestic violence may be a one-off incident or may be repeated many times - each incident helps the perpetrator gain greater power and control over the victim.

Victims can be men or women, and perpetrators can be men or women. Domestic violence can occur in any relationship - gay/straight, old or young.

Research suggests that gay, bisexual and transgender men experience domestic violence and abuse at slightly higher levels than heterosexual women.

The British Crime Survey in 2005/06 found that 20% of domestic violence victims were men and in these cases just under half had a female abuser. Between 1 in 6 and 1 in 7 men will be affected by domestic violence from partners, ex-partners or family members in their lifetime. Around 27 men a year are killed by current or former partners in domestic violence incidents.

There are different types of domestic violence. Individuals might experience one or

more types, and none is more or less acceptable than any of the others. The following is a general list and everyone has different experiences of abuse. A great deal of abuse happens behind closed doors; the first step out of the situation is breaking the silence and getting some help. At the end of this section are some telephone numbers and websites where you can get information and support to make that first step.

### *Physical abuse*

Probably the easiest type of abuse to identify and includes: pushing, biting, hitting, punching, slapping, burning, strangling and kicking or using a weapon, throwing things and, ultimately, murder. Research has shown that women can be physically abusive to male (and female) partners, and that there are many men who experience physical abuse: you are not alone.

### *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, checking your mobile phone.

**Domestic violence can happen in any relationship and can happen to anyone.**



© istockphoto.com, Diego Cervo

### *Verbal abuse*

This can range from constant criticism, sexualised taunts and humiliation in public, through name calling to out-and-out foulmouthed abuse.

### *Sexual abuse*

This includes all forced and unwanted sexual activity. It may also include withholding affection to ‘punish’ you for not obeying

their rules. This can also include feeling or being forced to have sex when you don’t want to.

### *Financial abuse*

Obsessive control of all monies so that you do not know what is 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.

## Are you being abused?

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 actually be a 'victim' of domestic abuse.
- 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, scared that you will not be able to find a new partner and live alone. Or scared of what will happen to your children and your relationship with them.
- 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.



## Myth Busting

### *Men aren't victims of domestic violence*

Many men who experience domestic abuse from a current or former partner 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.

### *Men should be able to handle it*

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

### *Men who experience domestic abuse are not 'real men'*

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'.

### *The abuser cannot help it*

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

### *Ignoring it will make it go away*

Men who experience domestic abuse may try different techniques to cope. Coping strategies 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 your partner. 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.

Coping may make life temporarily easier but it is unlikely to stop the 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 trusted family and friends 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, or you could find yourself being arrested.
- Talk over your situation with one of the national or local domestic violence support agencies - there are details at the end of this section.



## Support information – where to get help

All of these agencies are confidential and have trained staff and volunteers who can listen to you, help you talk through your situation and work out what you want to do next.

### Men's Advice Line

This is a help-line in England and Wales providing support for male victims of domestic violence. There is lots of useful information on their website and they also have language and translation services. The helpline also provides support to families and friends of men who are victims of domestic violence.

0808 801 0327 (free from most landlines and mobile phones)

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

### Broken Rainbow

Support for gay men, lesbians, 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)

### Survivors UK

A national organisation providing information, support and counselling for men who have been raped or sexually abused. Thousands of men contact them every year and their website is a great resource. They also have a national helpline. 0845 122 1201 (7pm to 10pm Mon/Tue/Thu)

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

### Victim Support

Victim Support is the national charity which helps people affected by crime. They provide

free and confidential support to help you deal with your experience, whether or not you report the crime.

0800 30 30 900

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

### The Samaritans

If you think you might benefit from confidential emotional support then the Samaritans are here for you. You do not have to be suicidal to contact them. The Samaritans will not judge you if you call. The Samaritans understand that sometimes it can feel difficult to pick up the telephone, but they are there to listen.

08457 90 90 90

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

### How the NHS can help

The NHS is working to ensure that there is a good level of knowledge about domestic violence and the support that is available locally through community pharmacists, general practitioners, practice nurses, accident and emergency departments and other front line services. If you present at any of these services you should be helped to find the support you need. Conversations with healthcare professionals are confidential and the healthcare professional should talk to you before they contact any services or support agencies. They will not discuss what you have told them with your partner unless you explicitly tell them to. NHS Direct has information on domestic violence on their website or you can call them for advice.

0845 46 47

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