

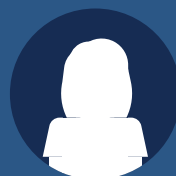
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE DURING PERIODS OF CRISIS

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT NOW OR IF YOU ARE IN DANGER CALL 000. TO TALK TO SOMEONE, CALL 1800 RESPECT ON 1800 737 732

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased pressure and stress on many Australian households, as people across the country have experienced extended periods of isolation and ongoing financial insecurity. **There has been an increase in mental health symptoms in Australia**, and **some people have reported increases in their use of alcohol and other drugs as a way of coping with stress, anxiety and isolation**.

We know that domestic violence increases during periods of crisis and when families are isolated from other social contacts and supports. Since the 1st recorded COVID-19 case, google **searches about domestic violence have increased by 75%**. In comparison, hotlines have seen a decrease in calls which suggest that those experiencing domestic violence may not be able to access those services safely. This factsheet is for anyone who might be a victim or survivor of domestic violence, as well as for family and friends who are concerned about a loved one. The purpose of this factsheet is to provide you with information about the signs of domestic and family violence, safety planning and support options available.

TWO IN FIVE AUSTRALIANS AGED 18 YEARS AND OVER HAVE EXPERIENCED AN INCIDENT OF PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15:



ONE IN FOUR AUSTRALIAN WOMEN HAVE EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE FROM AN INTIMATE PARTNER

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IS THE GREATEST HEALTH RISK FACTOR
FOR WOMEN AGED 25-44**



WHAT IF HOME IS NOT A SAFE PLACE?

If you are feeling unsafe at home, you might be experiencing domestic violence. Domestic violence is an abuse of power, where a person uses violence, threats, intimidation, or force to control or coerce a partner or former partner. It is an act or behaviour that causes you fear.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE. IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REMEMBER IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT. YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR PARTNER'S PATTERN OF ABUSE. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE AND LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE.

WARNING SIGNS THAT A PARTNER MAY BE ABUSIVE

Tactics of Power, Control, and Coercion

Being in an unsafe relationship has been likened to standing in the middle of a thick fog for some people. The 'climate' caused by domestic abuse can make it hard to see clearly what is taking place or that what is happening to you is wrong. It is common for people experiencing abuse to question their own judgement, feel shame, or wonder if they are making too big of a deal of what is happening. Much of this is due to control tactics being both overt and covert.

Below are some 'green' and 'red flags.' Green flags highlight healthy behaviours to look for in a loving relationship, while 'red flags' indicate dynamics of power, control, and coercion.

GREEN FLAGS

- Says yes and no honestly
- Accepts yes's and no's
- Supports your personal growth
- Cares about your boundaries
- Trusts you
- Communicates openly
- Listens to you and respects your opinions
- Confronts issues directly and respectfully
- Encourages you to have your own interests and hobbies
- Has their own interests and hobbies
- Admits their own mistakes

RED FLAGS

- Has a history of abusing others
- Blames failure of previous relationships on their former partners
- Monitors your activities, computer, texts, or phone
- Responds with anger, judgement, and blame to accountability
- You have to 'earn' their attention or love
- Shames, guilts, or forces you to say or do things you don't want to
- Wants you to stop spending time with friends, family, or colleagues
- Insists you give up your own hobbies, activities, or work
- Controls money, sex, or other things at home
- Denies or, minimizes your feelings
- Blames you for having valid feelings of unhappiness or anger
- Is vindictive and vengeful towards you
- Intimidates or threatens you
- Humiliates you
- Repeatedly criticises you and puts you down

SIGNS OF GASLIGHTING

Gaslighting is a common technique that aims to increase power, lower your self-confidence and gradually make you doubt your own reality. For example, when you are in a situation where things go wrong someone trying to gaslight you will make you feel that everything is your fault. If you question this, they may tell you that you got things wrong, that you are not remembering things the way they happened or that you are confused.

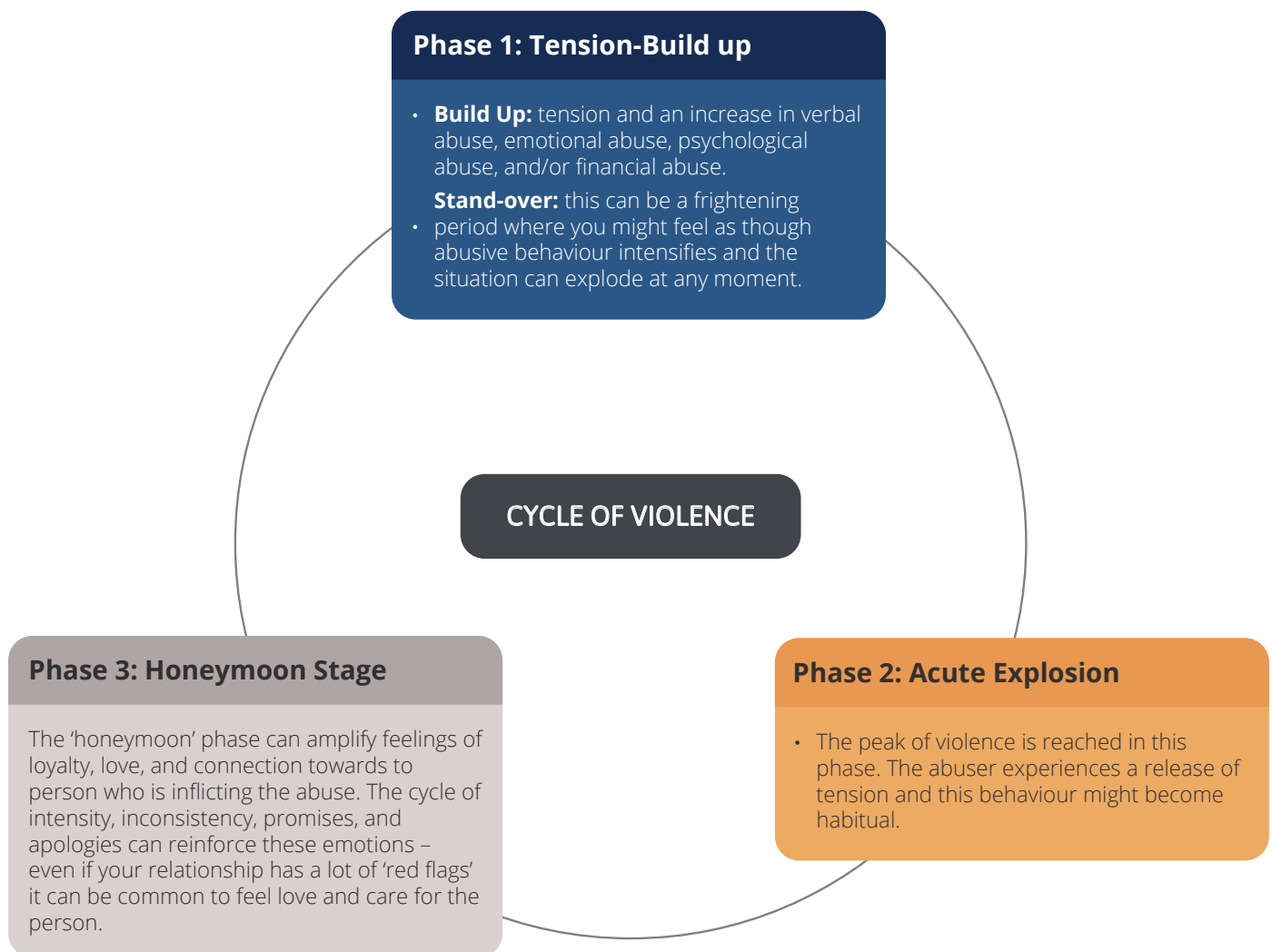
Signs

- Lying openly and making you question if anything they tell you is true
- Denying events or actions, even though you have proof
- Using the things or people most important to you to hurt you
- Wearing you down gradually, making it hard to see what they are doing
- Doing things that don't match their words.
- Inconsistently praising you
- Projecting their issues on to you
- Deliberately trying to confuse you
- Calling you 'crazy' and minimising your emotions



CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

Experiences of violence are diverse, yet the Cycle of Violence can be a helpful tool to demonstrate what experiences of violence might look like. The phases can be experienced in a cycle, or in parts.



Over time, the 'honeymoon' phase passes and the cycle may begin again.

Not all domestic and family violence fits within this framework. Please remember if your own experience is different to what is represented here it does not mean it isn't serious or does not reflect a serious cycle of violence.

PLANNING AND DECIDING TO LEAVE

Knowing what is unacceptable to you or where you draw the line can be an important step in safety planning. It is always up to you whether you choose to stay or leave an abusive relationship but knowing your limits might prevent you from gradually accepting abusive behaviours as a normal part of life.

YOU DESERVE TO BE SAFE AND HAPPY

ASSESSING RISK

Domestic abuse involves a pattern of behaviour, that often escalates and gets worse. This can happen suddenly or slowly over time. Escalation can be a transition from one form of abuse to another, or it can involve an increase in severity of similar types of behaviour. If you're experiencing escalation of abuse, your partner may even have threatened to kill you. **This is a serious threat.** It is important to be aware of the signs that escalation of power and control might be lethal. Some of these signs include:

- More frequent and intense physical violence
- Presence of weapons, especially if they have threatened you with them
- Attempts to choke or strangle you
- Extreme jealousy
- Suicidal thoughts or behaviours
- You believe they are capable of killing you
- Extreme jealousy
- Is suicidal
- You believe they are capable of killing you

SAFETY PLANNING

Safety planning involves thinking about your experiences and taking some steps to help you feel and be safer. It is an opportunity for you to focus on the proactive and practical strategies that you can put in place. Your safety plan will need to be relevant to you and your situation and be adapted if your situation changes.

**STAYING SAFE ISN'T ABOUT CHANGING YOUR BEHAVIOUR TO STOP SOMEONE GETTING ANGRY.
YOU ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANOTHER PERSON'S VIOLENCE**

The best way to make a safety plan is with the help of a support service. Trusted friends and family members can also play a role. If you would like help to make a safety plan you can call **1800 RESPECT** on **1800 737 732** or contact them through their online chat service.



ESCAPE PLANNING

- Having a trusted person who knows what you are going through and who you can rely on for support is one of the best ways to improve your safety
- Pack an escape bag and if possible, have a spare mobile phone with prepaid credit to allow you to contact support when needed
- Download the Daisy app (see below) and other safety apps to connect to local services
- Consider documenting evidence of abuse including videos, photos, audio, and diary entries that can create a record of what has happened, when it happened, and how it has impacted you
- Have an escape plan ready for when you feel as though it is not safe to stay where you are
- Plan and practice escaping. If you have children, plan and practice with them and speak with them about how to keep themselves safe and how to call 000 for emergency services.
- Plan and practice the quickest and easiest way to leave where you are. If you have children, plan and practice escaping with them and identify areas that are the least dangerous to flee to.
- Have trusted people who know you may be calling upon them if you have to leave quickly
- Leave an escape bag with a trusted person with spare keys, money, important papers, and things you will need
- Get a PO Box to have ready for important mail and documents to be redirected
- Make a plan for your pets and where you can leave them safely, whether with trusted friends, a boarding facility, or pet-friendly shelters that may have a community domestic violence program for temporary care
- Get legal advice and know your rights, contact a local women's legal service or violence court advocacy services

THE FUTURE

Recovery from violence and escape is a highly individual experience. For some, it might take multiple attempts to leave the cycle of abuse. Leaving an abusive relationship might also be the first step in a wider, ongoing process of recovery. Some common experiences after leaving an abusive relationship include:


- Disturbed sleep
- Feelings of fear, anxiety, vulnerability
- Feeling anger, rage, irritability
- The experience of grief, sadness, loss
- Feeling triggered by smells, sounds, memories
- Feeling like you are on 'high alert'
- Experiencing symptoms of mental health problems like depression

Remember you do not have to experience these feelings alone. If you need support with any of these feelings please contact one of the support services listed at the bottom of this factsheet.


SUPPORT OPTIONS AND USING TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP SAFE

1800RESPECT TELEPHONE AND ONLINE COUNSELLING

Nationwide support can be found via 1800RESPECT which will continue to operate as per usual, 24 hours per day to support people impacted by domestic or family violence and abuse, as well as sexual assault.

 1800 737 732

The website contains an immediate exit button that will allow you to quickly leave the website if you are feeling unsafe. As a free and confidential service, 1800RESPECT can offer information about community-based packages, services, and opportunities to support you and keep you safe.

 www.1800respect.org.au

DAISY APP FROM 1800RESPECT

This is an app which connects women around Australia to services. Daisy can link you with service phone numbers, we used to search the internet, and give you information.

Friends and family members can use Daisy to gather information and support your decision:

 www.1800respect.org.au/daisy/

Find out more about the domestic violence facts shared in this factsheet

 Understanding family violence - Family violence myths facts

 Coronavirus lockdown domestic violence complaints in australia rise even as reports by phone-fall

REFERENCE

- 1 Dawel, A., Shou, Y., Smithson, M., Cherbuin, N., Banfield, M., Caelear,...& Batterham, P. J. (2020). The Effect of COVID-19 on Mental Health and Wellbeing in a Representative Sample of Australian Adults. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11(1), 1026, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.579985>
- 2 Callinan, S., Smit, K. Mojica-Perez, Y., D'Aquino, S., Moore, D., & Kuntsche, E. (2020). Shift in Alcohol Consumption During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Early Indications from Australia. *Addiction*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/add.15275>

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES VISIT CRACKS IN THE ICE AND/OR THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS SUPPORT PROGRAM