

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a pattern of abusive and controlling behaviours in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence happens among heterosexual couples and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds, and economic levels. The abuse may be physical, emotional, sexual, spiritual, psychological or financial in nature. It may include threats, damage to personal property, harm to pets, controlling access to money, denying or belittling someone's spiritual beliefs, or isolation from family and friends.

Recognizing abuse is the first step to getting help

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence. While physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. The first step to breaking free is recognizing that your situation is abusive. Once you acknowledge the reality of the abusive situation, then you can get the help you need.

Impacts of Domestic Violence on Children

Domestic violence is considered to be a type of child abuse because of the known risks to and impacts on children. The risks of harm to children can be both physical and emotional in nature.

- Children witness or are aware of the abuse in 80-90% of domestic violence cases
- Children are impacted by domestic violence even if they are not being hit themselves.
- Children who witness domestic violence have similar emotional problems to children who are physically abused
- When one or more adult is physically abusive, the risk of physical harm to children is increased. Children can be hurt if parents are out of control, acting violently, or throwing/ damaging objects.

Witnessing a parent being abused can be traumatizing for children and can cause them to experience post-traumatic stress disorder. Children who witness abuse are more likely to be abusive themselves (boys) or to be abused (girls) when they grow up. (source: Nova Vita)

Signs of an abusive relationship

There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is fear of your partner. If you feel like you have to walk on eggshells around your partner—constantly watching what you say and do in order to avoid a blow-up—chances are your relationship may be unhealthy or abusive. Other signs include a partner who belittles you or tries to control you, and feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, and desperation.

To determine whether your relationship is abusive, answer the questions below. The more “yes” answers, the more likely it is that you’re in an abusive relationship.

Your Inner Thoughts and Feelings	Your Partner’s Belittling Behavior
<p>Do you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel afraid of your partner much of the time? • avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner? • feel that you can’t do anything right for your partner? • believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated? • wonder if you’re the one who is crazy? • feel emotionally numb or helpless? 	<p>Does your partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • humiliate or yell at you? • criticize you and put you down? • treat you so badly that you’re embarrassed for your friends or family to see? • ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments? • blame you for their own abusive behavior? • see you as property or a sex object, rather than as a person?

Your Partner's Violent Behavior or Threats	Your Partner's Controlling Behavior
<p>Does your partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a bad and unpredictable temper? • hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you? • threaten to take your children away or harm them? • threaten to commit suicide if you leave? • force you to have sex? • destroy your belongings? 	<p>Does your partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act excessively jealous and possessive? • control where you go or what you do? • keep you from seeing your friends or family? • limit your access to money, the phone, or the car? • constantly check up on you?

If you are experiencing violence or abuse, there are many places you can go for help.

If you are in immediate danger or are afraid for your life dial 911

If you require assistance or safe lodging you can contact Hiatus House 24 hours a day: 519-252-7781 or 1-800-265-5142

If you have reasonable grounds to suspect a child is exposed to domestic violence, contact your local Children's Aid Society at 519-252-1171

Legal Aid Ontario has services to help people experiencing domestic violence. Call our toll-free number at 1-800-668-8258 or contact a [Family Law Service Centre](#) or the [Refugee Law Office](#) for help and information.

Legal Aid Ontario services extend to all victims of domestic violence, regardless of immigration status in Canada. Free telephone interpretation services for non-English or non-French speaking applicants are also available.