



## What is Family Violence?

- Family violence is any behavior by a family member which causes you harm or makes you feel afraid.
- Family violence is sometimes called “domestic violence”, “abuse” or “an abusive relationship”.
- Family violence can happen to anyone.
- You have the right to feel safe at home. You have the right to BE SAFE at home. You should not be living in fear.

Family violence is behavior by one person to another, within a family or family-like relationship, which causes fear, hurt or harm, whether physical, sexual, emotional or financial.

## Who causes family violence?

The Victorian Family Violence Protection Act 2008 views family violence as happening between people in a family, or who are in a relationship that can be considered to be a family like relationship. Under this Act, family violence can be caused by:

- a current or former spouse (husband or wife)
- a current or former partner, male or female
- a current or former relative, eg:
  - a son or daughter
  - a parent
  - an uncle
  - a cousin
  - a grandparent
- For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Act specifies the meaning of relative: **For an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person – (relative) includes a person who, under Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition or contemporary social practice, is the person's relative. (Section 10 page 19)**
- a person who has, or has had, an intimate personal relationship – sexual or not –with you
- someone who you think of as like a family member. The Act explains in detail how the court will decide this. [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol\\_act/fvpa2008283/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/fvpa2008283/)
- a child who normally or regularly lives with you
- a child who used to normally or regularly live with you
- a carer

## How do you know if it is Family Violence?

“Sometimes there is trouble at home. How do I know if this is family violence?”

## YOU MAY BE EXPERIENCING FAMILY VIOLENCE if you have been:

- hurt by a family member
- worried about someone in your family hurting you or your children
- putting up with abusive or controlling behaviour that causes physical, sexual or emotional harm
- made to feel worthless, because of constant abuse or put-downs
- struggling to buy basic household essentials because a family member is withholding money
- feeling anxious and afraid about what a family member is going to do next - “It feels like we all have to walk around on egg shells to keep him happy”

Take this quick quiz to see if you are experiencing family violence:  
<http://www.dvrcv.org.au/HelpHub/WarningSigns.htm>

## Examples of family violence

The following are just some examples of family violence:

- **Emotional abuse**
  - constantly making fun of you
  - ridiculing you in front of his friends
  - embarrassing you in front of your children or friends
  - threatening to harm himself if you leave him
- **Social abuse**
  - not letting you see your friends
  - preventing you from spending time with your family
  - making you feel guilty about what time you get home
  - constantly checking up on where you are
- **Sexual abuse**
  - forcing you to participate in sexual activity when you don't want to eg:
    - have intercourse
    - watch pornography
    - take photos of you without your clothes
- **Physical abuse**
  - hitting, punching, choking, kicking
  - throwing objects
  - threatening to harm you
  - threatening to harm your pets
- **Financial abuse**
  - controlling the shared family money
  - preventing you from having access to your money
  - not giving you enough of your shared money for essential items such as food, petrol etc
  - refusing to let you have money for recreational purposes eg. going out with friends
- **Stalking**
  - when a partner, ex-partner, or other family member follows you around or repeatedly tries to contact you, even if you've said you don't want this. This can include:
    - constant phone calls
    - sending numerous text messages
    - repeatedly waiting near your house or your workplace

- **What if he never even touches me?**
  - "He never hits me. But he swears and yells at me all the time. And he won't let me use the car. And he takes my money and won't let me have any money to go shopping."
  - Abuse happens when one person tries to control or hurt another. Family Violence abuse can be physical or non-physical. Non-physical forms of abuse can be just as harmful as physical violence.

**Remember: Everyone has the right to feel safe at home. No-one should have to put up with abuse or violence in any form**

The Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) in Melbourne has lots of helpful information and advice for anyone who is experiencing family violence. Have a look at their website: <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/>

## Who can help?

There are a number of Family Violence support services that can assist people affected by family violence, including:

- **Police & Ambulance: 000**
- **Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service Victoria 1800 105 303**
- **Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria 1800 015 188 (24 hr) or 9322 3555**
- **Sexual Assault Crisis Line 1800 806 292 (24 hr) (toll free from a landline phone)**
- **Elizabeth Hoffman House Aboriginal Women's Refuge and Family Violence support 1800 796 112 or 03 9482 5744**
- **Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service 1800 064 865**
- **Women's Information and Referral Exchange 1300 134 130 (9:00 am – 5:00 pm)**
- **Victims of Crime Helpline 1800 819 817**
- **Kids Help Line 1800 551 800**
- **Lifeline 131 114**

