



Domestic Violence

“There can be no keener revelation of a society’s soul than the way in which it treats its children.”

– Nelson Mandela

■ WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic and family violence is any behaviour or pattern of behaviour that unlawfully restricts the freedom, self-determination, movement or actions of the other person, with whom a person has a relationship.

It can be directed at women, children and men. It can occur in heterosexual or same sex relationships and women can also be violent towards men. The majority of violence is male against female.

Domestic or family violence is usually about power imbalances. Some forms of this violence include:

- emotional, sexual and physical abuse
- social isolation
- financial control or
- deprivation by one or more members of the family against another

Young people can be direct victims of violence or observers of violence between family members. In 61% of domestic violence cases the victims had children in their care. Harm can be caused by seeing, hearing

or experiencing violence. Violence experienced as a child has a major impact on the child’s future and adult life.

Statistics

- In 2004, the majority of cases (61%) victims knew the offender.
- Violence can be carried out by males or females, but the majority of family violence is male against female and children. In 2004, 71% of victims of domestic violence were women.

– Lawlink NSW Government report, Trends and patterns in domestic violence assaults, Julie People*

A survey of young people found:

- 1 in 20 considered forcing a partner to have sex, throwing objects like plates at each other and slapping or punching to be part of “normal conflict” rather than “domestic violence”.
- 37% of males and 12% of females agreed with the statement: “men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household.”

– Australian domestic and family violence Clearinghouse Australian Statistics on Domestic Violence 2003



■ CASE STUDY

Rachel met Marcus at uni. She really thought he was the one. He was popular, good looking and, at first, treated her well. However, she occasionally saw him be very aggressive with other people and he was also jealous.

One night after a party Marcus accused Rachel of flirting with other guys and he slapped her across the face. After that he was always accusing her of cheating and the physical violence increased.

Sophie (Rachel’s friend), knew Rachel was occasionally hit but each time she said something Rachel would make excuses for Marcus and say it was her fault and that he loved her. Every time Marcus hit her, he then said sorry, he loved her and he wouldn’t do it again. Over time, Rachel stopped seeing her friends, she wasn’t allowed to go out on her own and Marcus always had to know where she was and who she was with.

One night Marcus beat up Rachel and she ended up in hospital. Because of the hospital’s obligation to protect Rachel, the police were called and Rachel was provided with an apprehended violence order (AVO). The AVO initiated a legal requirement that Marcus maintain a certain distance from Rachel. Sophie helped Rachel by providing support and connecting her with services that could help.

ACTIVITY 1

Teachers note: These activities and discussion about domestic violence could result in a disclosure about abuse.

1. What is our culture’s message about violence towards women and children?

2. Referring to the above statistics and survey of young people how would this view affect the balance of power in an unhealthy or healthy relationship?

3. How does society portray

violence towards women/men in advertisements, sporting teams and celebrities?

4. Brainstorm elements of a healthy/unhealthy relationship, e.g:

- values/thoughts & beliefs
- respect
- communication
- decision making
- balance of power
- trust
- companionship
- honesty

Discuss the Cycle of Violence. That is, the idea that perpetrators of violence have usually been victims themselves.



REFUGES FOR VICTIMS

The St Vincent de Paul Society operates several refuges for women and children and men and children who have to leave their home to escape family violence. The refuge provides protection from violence and support from staff. This includes help with food and clothing, or help to find a new, safe home.

The worker can also refer the family to counselling. Counselling for children is also necessary as violence also has an impact on them.

The family may apply for an apprehended violence order to stop the perpetrator from hurting them.

WIDER IMPACTS FOR THOSE EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is a major cause of homelessness for women and children. Children who are homeless are at increased risk of experiencing homelessness as an adult.

Studies have found that many children who witness domestic violence have been found to have higher levels of emotional and behavioural problems than other children.

Effects of domestic violence on children include:

- disturbed sleep
- developmental delays
- regressed behaviour
- psychosomatic illnesses
- behavioural problems.

Children who have experienced violence are at increased risk of displaying aggressive behaviour as an adult. This means the violence gets passed on through generations. The impact on young people can include using violence in their relationships, abusing alcohol or other drugs, suicide, self harm, dropping out of school and bullying.

WHAT CAN I DO?

- Say NO to violence.
- Do a presentation at school reinforcing the message that violence is NOT okay.
- If you know someone experiencing domestic violence, be there to listen and support them. It is important to remember that for those involved it may be difficult to leave the relationship and situations are often more complex than they seem.
- If you're in an unhealthy or unsafe relationship or experiencing violence of any sort, talk to a teacher or friend you trust.
- Vinnies cares for women and children after the violence has occurred, but change needs to happen to stop

violence before it begins.

- Support and/or lobby for policies that will stop violence, support early intervention and break the cycle of domestic violence.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The White Ribbon Day School website has activities directed at further education on respectful relationships and breaking down stigma.

“Campaign in a box” provides practical activities for young people on a range of topics and provides ideas of different ways to present them to young people.

Local contact details:
Teen Help Line 1800 551 800



For more information

National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse (NAPCAN) www.napcan.org.au

NSW Police Force community issues-domestic violence page www.police.nsw.gov.au

Department of Community Services Impact of domestic violence page

www.community.nsw.gov.au/preventing_child_abuse_and_neglect.html

Bursting the Bubble www.burstingthebubble.com