

Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence refers to controlling or intimidating behavior towards a partner or family member. This behavior is intentional and deliberate and it can be physical, emotional, verbal, financial or sexual in nature. Examples of such behavior are things such as shaming, preventing someone from working or choosing their own career, withholding money or demanding explanations of every penny spent, refusing to listen, yelling, stalking, inappropriate sexual pressure, constant blaming, threats to self harm or others if the relationship ends, constant checking of whereabouts or activities of their partners, being excessively possessive. Domestic violence exists across all genders, socio-economic groups and ethnic backgrounds.

Anyone can find themselves in an abusive relationship. However we know there are some individuals who are more vulnerable to being abused. Following are some examples:

- People who in their younger years, found themselves having to parent their parents.
- People who were not listened to as children. This results in believing their needs and wants don't matter.
- Children who were yelled at and then spoilt with gifts, apologies or loving behaviours. They grow up believing this is what happens in a loving relationship.
- Children who were blamed, ignored, put down or abused.

The above experiences can result in:

- Individuals prioritising the needs of others over their own and walking on eggshells around their partner.
- Individuals believing they can't say what they think and feel if it contradicts their partners for fear of his/her reaction.
- Individuals being uncertain if they should be feeling upset about something.
- Individuals not seeing family and or friends as often to avoid having to explain themselves to their partner or to avoid an argument.

Because children with abusive parents cannot leave them, they try to fix difficulties with their parents by making excuses for their behaviour and blaming themselves. As adults, they continue to blame themselves for difficulties in their relationship, which results in constantly doubting themselves. This then results in lacking confidence and assertion and low self-esteem. In time, this can result in feeling anxious and depressed.

Abusive behaviour is never acceptable or justifiable. A healthy relationship encourages mutual respect and understanding of boundaries and acceptance of shared blame. Differences are resolved in a respectful manner without becoming abusing.

Warning signs of domestic abuse

- Being constantly worried about not wanting to ever upset your partner and please them all the time.
- Checking in with your partner or partner calling you to expect a report of where and what you are doing.
- Talking about your partner's temper, jealousy, or possessiveness.
- Having frequent injuries, with the excuse of "accidents".
- Frequently missing work, school, or social occasions, without explanation.
- Having to wear clothes, make up or sunglasses to hide bruises or scars.

What could you do if you suspect a loved one is being abused?

Abuse goes on for long periods as it often happens behind closed doors. Abusers are great at controlling and manipulating. People in abusive relationships are often scared, ashamed, confused, indecisive and depressed. They need help understanding the nature of their relationship and support leaving them. By you identifying warning signs and offering support you could tremendously help someone end an abusive relationship. If you suspect someone is in an abusive relationship you can help by:

- Expressing concern and pointing what you have noticed.
- Asking if they are OK.
- Offering an opportunity to listen without judgment.
- Letting them know you want to help.
- Not putting pressure to take action or talk to you if they are not ready to do so.
- Assuring them you will keep whatever information they share in confidence.
- Respecting and supporting their decision.

Psychologists at Vida Psychology have extensive experience in helping individuals who are in abusive relationships. We provide a non-judgemental and supportive environment promoting an opportunity to talk and explore various options available to individuals.

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