
How can you help?

When you are concerned about someone experiencing family violence there are three things you can do to help:

ask them if they are safe at home
listen
safety plan.

Asking someone if they feel unsafe

Asking someone if they are experiencing family violence can be difficult. It's possible that the person experiencing violence may not recognise their experience as family violence, or they may not want to name it as such. It is however still powerful to acknowledge and reflect back on what they are experiencing and what you are seeing to the person experiencing family violence. It is however very powerful to name behaviours and what you are seeing to someone experiencing family violence. It can empower someone who has been experiencing family violence and other emotional abuse by showing them that other people can see what is happening.

It might be helpful to prepare questions or phrases that mention the specific behaviour you have seen, such as:

"I can understand this might be difficult for you to talk about. I am concerned about you and would like to help."

"You seem to be a bit anxious about responding to your partner's texts straight away. Is everything okay at home?"

"When you said earlier that your partner lashes out at you, I'm wondering if you can tell me what that means?"

It is Important to be non-judgemental and supportive. The most helpful thing you can do is let the person know you are there to support them.

The four most important things you can do are:

- Listen without interruption or judgement.
- Reflect back that the violence is not their fault and it's never justifiable.
- Believe and validate their experiences.
- Provide information that will support the person experiencing family violence to make their own choices (as much as possible) in what happens next.

Let them know about specialist family violence services that can offer professional support.

If they are not ready to talk – that's okay. Tell them you are here for them when they are ready.

If you want more support you can contact any of these services:

Intouch- Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence- 1800 755 988

1800Repect-1800 737 732

Safe Steps- 1800 015 188

Men's referral Service- 1300 766 491

You can ask for an interpreter- at no cost to you.

How to recognize family violence

The following are behaviors that an abuser may exhibit towards someone experiencing family violence:

- Makes the victim feel uncomfortable or afraid
- Often puts the victim down, humiliates them, or makes them feel worthless
- Constantly checks up on what the victim is doing or where they are going
- Tries to stop the victim from seeing their own friends or family
- Makes the victim feel afraid to disagree or say 'no' to them
- Constantly accuses the victim of flirting with others when this isn't true
- Tells the victim how the household finances should be spent, or stops them having any money for themselves
- Stops the victim from receiving medical help
- Scares or hurts the victim by being violent (for example, hitting, choking, smashing things, locking them in, driving dangerously to frighten them)
- Pressures or forces the victim to do sexual things that they don't want to do
- Threatens to hurt the victim, or to kill themselves, if the victim says they want to end the relationship
- Interferes with the victim's online access or access to the phone
- Hurts children (and/or pets) or performs violent actions in front of children

Signs that you might see in someone who may be experiencing family violence in an intimate partner relationship include:

- they are afraid of or anxious to please their partner
- their partner often orders them about or makes all the decisions
- they don't have access to an ATM card or have a financial allowance
- they seem anxious, depressed, avoid eye contact or have lost confidence
- they have physical injuries, often with unlikely explanations
- they regularly cancel appointments
- they get constant calls or texts from a current or ex-partner

Statement of Commitment for the prevention of Family Violence

The following commitment was part of the National Assembly's Resolution in 2018.

In the light of our Theology and Beliefs and in the Current Context, the Uniting Church commits itself to:

- Speak out strongly against Domestic and Family Violence of all types;
- Acknowledge this is an issue in all cultural, economic and social contexts including
 - among our own church members and leaders;
- Reject any abuse of theology to legitimate Domestic and Family Violence,
 - recognising that theologies which affirm gender equality and human dignity play an essential role in bringing to light and preventing Domestic and Family Violence;
- Develop sound policies and practices that:
- Promote the equality of men and women, girls and boys and people of all ages;
 - Create safe and inclusive communities, where people experience mutually
- respectful relationships and all can flourish;
 - Listen to the voices of children, young people and vulnerable people; and
 - Receive and take seriously reports or complaints of Domestic and Family
- Violence;
 - Provide support and referral to appropriate support services;
- Educate ministry agents, lay leaders and church members on Domestic and Family Violence and how to respond appropriately;
- Resource the church in how to respond to this issue, recognising and engaging with the diversity of cultures and languages that make up our communities; and
- Work constructively with people of other Christian denominations and other faiths, and with other organisations and groups across Australia in order to achieve these commitments.