

# What is domestic violence?

**Are you OK?**

Domestic violence is the use of power by one person in the family to gain control over another person. It includes

- verbal abuse
- emotional or psychological abuse
- spiritual abuse
- financial abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- criminal harassment and stalking
- cultural or immigration abuse

Anyone in the family can be a victim of abuse, including

- spouse or intimate partner
- children
- elderly parents
- disabled adults
- roommates
- pets

It can happen to anyone regardless of their

- gender
- sexual orientation
- social class
- age
- economic status
- ethnic background

Domestic violence may consist of occasional outbursts triggered by a specific situation: stress at work, the loss of a job, a misunderstanding, or a difference of opinion about a sensitive topic. It may lead to screaming, swearing, broken dishes, or a hole in the wall. Sometimes even physical assault. But in many cases, the incident passes and things return to normal.

But sometimes, the abuse continues and is used as a means of controlling the other person and forcing them to behave in certain ways. This is the type of abuse that tends to become worse over time. It is the type of abuse that this kit addresses.

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## Frequently asked questions

### **What about violence against men?**

Very often domestic violence is treated as if it is abuse of a woman by a man. In fact, both sexes can be abusers and both can be victims. However, most victims of violence that is reported to police are women. They are the most likely to be victims of serious physical violence and even killed.

## Handy resources

### **Domestic Abuse Intervention Program**

Power and Control Wheel - website  
<https://bit.ly/2mNTt07>