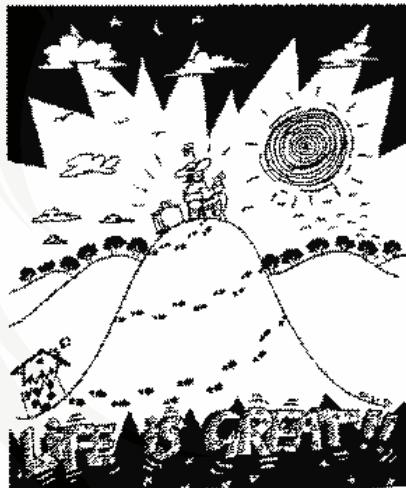


The RDVU provides:

- Short-term emergency accommodation
- Domestic violence counselling for women not needing accommodation
- A confidential and professional service
- Information and referrals for legal, housing and medical assistance
- Community education
- Outreach services to the Riverland region
- Building support networks for those who need to relocate to another area
- “Phoenix Network” computers with web cams at Pinnaroo Hospital, Swan Reach Area School, Waikerie Community Centre, Renmark Paringa Community Centre and Loxcare. Talk to us via computer! Saves travel, time, resources.





RDVU MISSION

The Riverland Domestic Violence Unit Inc. will provide a safe, secure and supportive option for women and children experiencing domestic violence. We will do this through our commitment to service excellence and having a unique understanding of our clients' special needs. The relationship with our clients will be developed by staff in an environment of trust and recognition of women's integrity, dignity, equality, diversity and potential within society.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Riverland Domestic Violence Unit Inc. (RDVU) is committed to providing safety and support to women and children experiencing domestic violence.

It is envisaged that through the incorporation of social justice principles the RDVU will play a significant role in empowering and healing survivors of domestic violence to enhance their potential to reach personal, social and economic goals.

In response to the universal recognition to promote women's integrity, dignity, equality, diversity and potential within society, the RDVU will actively facilitate community education programs.

OBJECTIVES

To provide safe, secure accommodation and support to women and children experiencing domestic violence regardless of race, age, sexuality, culture, spiritual beliefs, or circumstance.

To provide a safe and supportive atmosphere in a non-institutional and culturally sensitive environment where women are encouraged to make their own decisions.

To provide information, resources and options to all women and children and to work towards creating greater access to services for women and children.

To provide resources for the special needs of children.

To provide ongoing support as appropriate to women and children after they leave the accommodation service and to provide appropriate links into relevant community networks.

To promote a healthy rapport with other agencies within the community.

To promote the status of women and equal access to opportunities within society.

History of the Riverland Domestic Violence Unit

Rudimentary steps toward the establishment of the "Riverland Women's Shelter" was initiated in 1979 by a small group of social work students who identified a need for a general emergency shelter, while undertaking a group sociology project.

As the students collated statistics and other pertinent information for their project, it became clear that an emergency shelter for women and children fleeing domestic violence was urgently needed. The majority of women requiring shelter from domestic violence were taken to Adelaide. Most of them were reluctant to leave the area, mainly due to their concern about the adjustment for their children from a country to city lifestyle.

Over the next four years, numerous government and community groups lobbied for the establishment of a women's shelter. These included the Riverland Community Development Board, Loxton Council, Riverland Government Association and the Y.W.C.A.

It was with the assistance of the Y.W.C.A. that in May 1981 the first submission was forwarded to the Minister for Community Welfare. The submission was subsequently acknowledged and approved with an assurance that the proposal would receive first priority when funds became available.

These elusive funds escaped the committee's eager hands for three years and continued frustrations were being experienced by human service workers attempting to secure adequate emergency services for women and children in crisis.

A new steering committee was formed in June 1984 and members injected a great deal of energy and commitment to renew the propulsion for the establishment of the Shelter.

The delay in the provision of funds resulted in the compilation of a revised submission together with a complete budget estimate for capital, operating and salary costs.

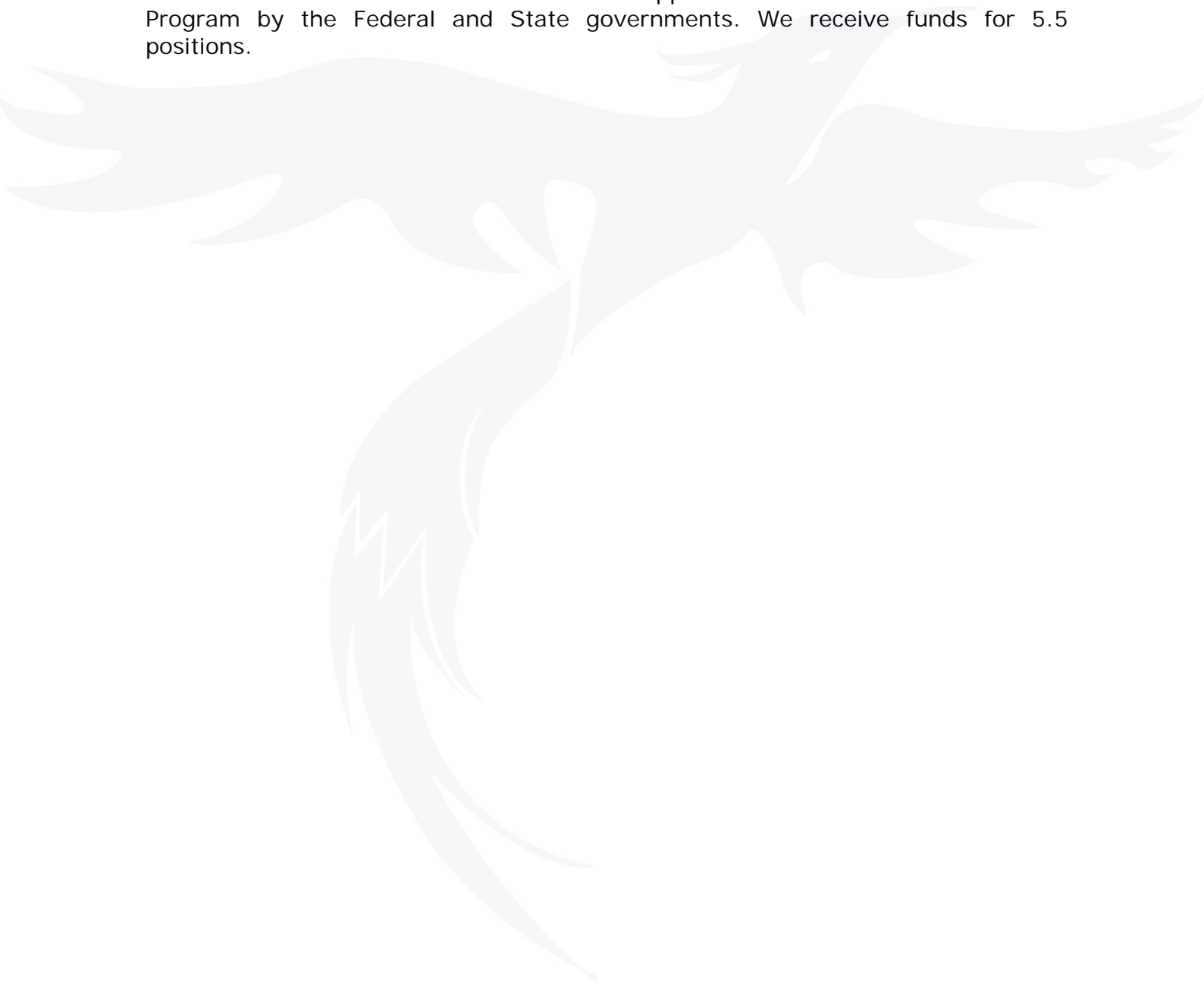
By September 1984 the Minister announced an allocation of \$10,000 towards the Shelter. The committee received numerous letters of support and encouragement from the community and government organisations and in particular financial support from both the Loxton and Berri District Councils. The South Australian Housing Trust agreed to provide suitable rental accommodation as they had for similar services in the past.

In March 1985 the first public meeting was held to elect a Management Committee. With funds provided by the government, the Management Committee employed a temporary worker from July to December 1985 to continue the practical administrative work involved in establishing a shelter such as purchasing equipment, liaising with funding bodies, attending meetings and other public relations activities.

Following the permanent appointment of an Administrator in December 1985 and two shelter workers in February 1986 the shelter became operational on a half time basis by February 1986.

By September 1986 the shelter was fully operational and could cater for six families at any one time and seven Women's Housing Association homes. By July 1987 an allocation of 5.5 staff reflected a more adequate and comparative amount granted to other shelters in the State. In February 2000 the Riverland Women's Shelter changed its name to the Riverland Domestic Violence Unit.

The Riverland Domestic Violence Unit now accommodates up to six families in their high security outlet plus five independent homes rented from the South Australian Housing Trust. There is a children's room and a resource room for adults. The RDVU is funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program by the Federal and State governments. We receive funds for 5.5 positions.



THE COST?

The cost of domestic violence in Australia is enormous.

There are tangible costs eg:

- ❖ crisis accommodation
- ❖ legal
- ❖ income
- ❖ medical
- ❖ damaged items

Intangible costs eg:

- ❖ pain
- ❖ fear
- ❖ suffering
- ❖ changing schools
- ❖ lost income

Opportunity costs eg:

- ❖ loss of employment
- ❖ loss of promotion
- ❖ loss of quality of life

A recent study on the costs of domestic violence (*Access Economics 2004*) concluded that the cost of domestic violence was estimated at \$8.1 billion per annum.

Some studies imply that costings have not included children and if they do, it would have immense implications. Even if the most extreme position were not adopted, research indicates that domestic violence and child abuse co-occur in 30-60% of cases (*Edleson 1999*). Hence calculations of the costs of domestic violence that include costs of child abuse in 30-60% of cases would be significantly higher than estimates to date.

One study stated..."in no way can we "cost" the horrifying physical and psychological damage of the violence to the women and their children". (*Kerr & McLean 1996, p3*).



Warning signs!

If you answer yes to any of the questions below, you could be in an abusive relationship, or your relationship could become abusive.

- Do you feel nervous around him?
- Do you have to be careful to control your behaviour to avoid his anger?
- Do you feel pressured by him when it comes to sex?
- Are you scared of disagreeing with him?
- Does he criticise you, or humiliate you in front of other people?
- Is he always checking up or questioning you about what you do without him?
- Does he repeatedly and wrongly accuse you of seeing other guys?
- Do you often do things to please him, rather than to please yourself?
- Do you feel that, with him, nothing you do is ever good enough?
- Does he prevent you from going out or doing things you want to do?
- Do you feel that, with him, nothing you do is ever good enough?

The abusers image of me

Place a tick next to the words that have been said to you by someone close -

| | |
|--|--|
| You are fat | |
| | |
| You are ugly | |
| | |
| You can't look after the kids properly | |
| | |
| You can't even keep the house clean | |
| | |
| You are hopeless | |

If you have been kept isolated from friends and family, you hear only these words repeated to you over and over again.

Make up a list of things you like about yourself and compare them to the following example

| What I like about me | How an abusive person turns it around |
|----------------------|---|
| I am intelligent | You are a smart arse and a know all |
| I am creative | That's a waste of time and a waste of money |
| I am considerate | You're a crawler or you're too soft |

Do you relate to any of the above? These comments are abusive. If you are hearing them all the time, you will begin to believe them. If you continue to experience such abuse you will no longer believe that you are a worthwhile person. You will think that you are fat, ugly, useless, dumb, and even a useless mother. No one has the right to abuse you. If you have children, they will also be suffering abuse if they see it, if they hear it, and if they feel it. Seek help before it's too late.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE QUIZ



- 1. What is the most common source of injury among women?*
 - Auto accidents
 - Physical abuse by male social partners
 - Muggings and rape, combined
- 2. Which age group reports the most violence by someone they are intimate with?*
 - 16 to 24
 - 25 to 34
 - 35 to 64
 - 65 and over
- 3. Boys who witness their fathers' violence aretimes more likely to engage in spouse abuse in later adulthood than boys from non-violent homes.*
 - 2 times more likely
 - 5 times more likely
 - 10 times more likely
- 4. When are female victims of domestic violence more likely to be slain by their husbands?*
 - When separated from them
 - When co-residing
- 5. Over.....of violent victimisations against women were committed by someone known to them.*
 - 1/4
 - 1/2
 - 2/3
- 6. How many more times are women compared to men, likely to experience violence from someone they are intimate with?*
 - 2 times more likely
 - 5 times more likely
 - 10 times more likely

Answers: 1. b 2. a 3. c 4. a 5. c 6. c

Most frequently asked questions:

- **What is domestic violence?**

Domestic violence occurs when one person in a relationship uses abusive methods to exert power and control over the other. The way perpetrators gain power and control varies, and if not stopped can escalate to physical violence including murder.

Domestic violence is not physical abuse alone. It includes verbal, financial, social, sexual, physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual abuse. **The abuse is not a “one off” situation.** It is normal to have occasional disagreements within the family setting. However domestic violence occurs on a continual basis.

- **Where is the domestic violence unit?**

Because some perpetrators of domestic violence can use extreme methods of control and may pursue their partner, the street addresses of our accommodation units are confidential. We employ various security options for extra protection.

- **I live next door to a household where there is domestic violence. I am too scared to do anything about it.**

You should always do whatever you feel possible and safe for you. For example, telephone police. **You could save someone’s life.**

- **Do women deserve to be abused?**

No-one deserves to be abused. This includes women, children and men. Most conflicts can be overcome by appropriate methods of communication. Many partners may benefit from participating in various educational courses including – conflict management, communication skills and for some perpetrators, anger management workshops.

- **I am experiencing domestic violence but the children are safe aren't they?**

Most definitely not! Even very young children can hear, see and sense the abuse. Therefore children are also being abused. Some of the effects of domestic violence on children include – bed wetting, nightmares, asthma, headaches, feeding difficulties, sadness, bullying, shyness, speech problems, depression and so on. Some are caught in the crossfire of physical abuse and are injured or murdered.

- **I don't need accommodation, but can I still receive some assistance?**

Our service also provides support for women who are experiencing domestic violence but do not require accommodation. We can also arrange transfers to other locations if required.

- **Why don't women just leave if her partner is abusive?**

There are many reasons and some examples are – no income, fear of being found, fear of murder of herself and children, further threats of violence, harassment at work, promises of change, and threats of suicide.

- **What is the “Phoenix Network”?**

The RDVU was funded by a Federal grants program, Networking the Nation to establish a network of computers with web cams throughout the Riverland region. So far computers have been placed in the Pinnaroo Hospital, Swan Reach Area School, Brown’s Well Area School, Renmark Paringa Community Centre, Loxcare in Loxton and the Waikerie Community Centre. In the future there will be one in Blanchetown and one in Morgan.

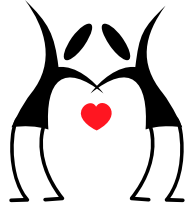
The general public will have access to these computers and will find our web page with information about our service and more information about domestic violence. If women have further queries and they would like to speak to a worker there will be a place on the web page to click on and a web cam session can occur. A worker at the RDVU will answer the call and women's questions will be answered. The Phoenix Network is available from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday. There may be some restrictions to opening times at the various locations.

- **Are there any rules for staying at the RDVU?**

Rules are in place and are based around health and safety issues. The crisis accommodation units are shared by up to six families. Each family have a private bedroom with a key however other room and amenities are shared. There is no alcohol or illegal drugs or activities allowed on the property.

- **Do women have to separate from their partner to use the RDVU?**

The RDVU workers offer options for women to choose from. If women wish to separate from their partner then there are income, housing and legal options for them to choose. If a woman wishes a temporary break from her partner, then counselling options for their partner are offered. Some women just need support to stay in their relationship.



Relationship characteristics

| Healthy Relationships | Abusive Relationships |
|---|--|
| <p>Joint decision making and sharing responsibilities: <i>Partnership</i></p> | <p>The abuser makes most decisions and conducts a "master over servant" relationship</p> |
| <p>Freedom to decide issues of work, school and money: <i>Feeling independent</i></p> | <p>Abuser denies job freedom and controls the finances</p> |
| <p>Shares fears, insecurities and feelings with partner: <i>Emotional honesty</i></p> | <p>Abuser is jealous and uses reasons of stress and passion to justify actions</p> |
| <p>Acceptance that "no" means no: <i>Sexual respect</i></p> | <p>Abuser forces partner into sexual acts against their will</p> |
| <p>Expressions are non-violent: <i>Physical and mental safety</i></p> | <p>Abuser may hit, choke, kick, pull hair, use weapons, verbally abuse, push etc</p> |
| <p>Each supports differing views, feelings, friends and activities and listens, understands and values partner's opinions: <i>Respect</i></p> | <p>Abuser may be charming in public and the opposite in private. May destroy family pets, use put downs to control their partner (name calling), mind games, isolates partner from family and friends.</p> |

Some practical info for women experiencing domestic violence



Keep a diary

Make a note every time you are assaulted giving the day and time. That way you can easily recall what actually happened whether you are going to see the police or even if you are not ready to report such incidences.

Tell someone

Tell a friend, a relative or someone at work what you've been exposed to. That way someone knows even if you don't have the strength to do anything about it at the time.

Document your injuries

Make notes and try to take photos of your injuries. If you see a doctor make sure he/she takes pictures too. Even if you're not ready now those photos can be used the day you decide to take legal action to protect yourself.

He says this was the only/last time

Find a line of retreat so you can leave quickly if he assaults you again. Find out where you can go at any hour, maybe a friend, a relative or the social authorities. Ask your friend for a key to her house - that way you always have a place to go. Look up the nearest domestic violence service during office hours, or the police after hours.

Contact a shelter/domestic violence service

At a Woman's Shelter/Service you can talk to someone and get help if you so choose. The women you talk to will always listen, believe you and never question your experiences. You will not be asked to leave your partner! You will be given options for you to choose.

Make a police report

Make it very clear that you won't accept his behaviour. **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS A CRIME.** Reporting the perpetrator is crucial. Both for your sake and for the perpetrator to understand that what he did was a criminal offence.

What happens before the abuse begins?

Pay attention to how he talks about women

Listen to what he says about women in general. Maybe he's making comments about how women dress or about his female colleagues - these statements are indications of his general view of women.

Destruction and intimidation

Throwing and/or breaking (your) possessions are violent acts performed to frighten you. And don't believe that he is unable to control his frustration – does he do that at work? Using threatening gestures or merely his physical size to intimidate you are other ways to make you watch your step/keep you frightened.

Jealousy

Be warned if he insists *you* take responsibility for his emotions. If you feel obliged to stay at home instead of going to a party or seeing your friends *his* needs control your behaviour and you run the risk of becoming isolated. It shouldn't be your job to control his jealousy.

Complete control

Primarily the abuser tries to direct all situations, make decisions even if they concern her life and not his. He decides what to do and what to talk about. Gradually he takes more control and won't allow her having her own opinion about anything and finally he dictates everything she does and thinks. At this point her options seem very limited and she finds it hard to see a way out. Isolation - There's a pattern to this behaviour. He might be dropping her off at work and picking her up when she finishes. He allows her to work but preferably not full time – he likes her to spend more time at home. She's not allowed to attend parties at work or meeting colleagues in her free time. She loses touch with her friends and family because he won't let her see them. He rarely goes right out and forbids her but by acting cold and standoffish he gets his point across.

Violence and abuse becomes “normal” and survival, a way of life.

Why does she stay?

It is important to keep in mind that verbal/financial/social abuse may start long before physical abuse. When physical abuse starts the perpetrator already has a “grip” on her. She truly believes herself to be helpless and useless and that she would be lost without him. She takes his point of view and assumes responsibility for the abuse – it's all her fault and she's a bad person. She starts to blame herself and it becomes vital to hide her shame to the rest of the world. This is why she can keep up appearances for years with no-one suspecting that she is experiencing abuse.

Violence and tenderness

The man is usually tender and kind in-between the physical abuse. He comforts her and tends to her injuries. This inconsistency makes the women focus on how kind he is rather than the fact that he abuses her.

Sexual power

Very often the physical assaults end with sexual intercourse. The woman chooses to accept intercourse rather than prolonging or intensifying the assault. This, by definition, is rape. Even so, women often don't consider this rape. She may state that he never raped her but agrees that he usually wants to have sexual intercourse after assaulting her and that she goes along with it, not because she wants to, but to calm him down and put a stop to the assault.

Don't trust him when he says he'll stop

A woman doesn't necessarily have to be physically locked up to be a prisoner in her relationship. Fear, mental and physical exhaustion renders her incapable of leaving. To leave a man that is regularly abusive is not an easy thing to do. The woman needs plenty of help and support to rid herself of the grip he has on her and take control of her life again. Step by step and little by little she can prepare herself to leave.

What kinds of men abuse their partners?

No particular group. Judges, policemen, lawyers as well as unemployed alcoholics can commit domestic violence. Men who abuse women almost never confess to being perpetrators of domestic violence. They are convinced that there's something wrong with their partner (or ex partner). *Her* behaviour causes the abuse in some way and he does not feel responsible for his actions. But the men still know that what they are doing is wrong – otherwise they'd be abusing her in broad daylight, for everyone to see. The man always has a choice, and he chooses to abuse his partner.

What kind of women are abused?

It could happen to anyone. The police often report domestic violence in connection with other crimes and from drug-environments in the course of their work. In well-to-do neighbourhoods the walls are thicker and the hedges higher but the violence is still there only not as visible.

How often do women report and give evidence against their perpetrators?

Women who report domestic violence are asking nothing more than their human rights. Assaulting someone is a crime. Women are more frequently than ever reporting abuse to the police.

For friends or relatives of someone experiencing domestic violence

Sometimes it can be distressing and frustrating if you have a friend or relative who you know is in a domestic violence relationship. You want to help her, but she keeps putting up with the abuse, making excuses for him. If she finally does leave, *you're* happy, but then she goes back to him and you can't understand why. She doesn't seem to listen to you or do what you think is right for her. It's really frustrating you and you feel like you don't want to help her anymore. You want to tell her that you've had enough.

Your response to her situation is really important. If she feels supported and encouraged, she may feel stronger and more able to make decisions. If she feels judged or criticized, she could be afraid to tell anyone else about the abuse.

It can be hard for someone to understand why someone would stay with their partner who is abusive, and from the outside it may seem easier to leave than it actually is.

There are lots of reasons why women feel they can't leave. Some of them include:

- He's made threats to kill himself if she leaves and she feels guilty
- He's made threats to hurt her, the kids or her family if she leaves
- He says that she's an unfit mother and he'll make sure she doesn't get the kids.
- She has low self esteem from all the putdowns
- She still loves him, he's not abusive all the time
- She doesn't think anyone will believe her because he seems like such a nice guy to everyone else
- She doesn't have any family or friends to help her because he's isolated her from them all
- She doesn't have any money

The most important thing you can do is to listen without judging, respect her decisions, and help her to find ways to become stronger and safer.

Questions you could ask and things you could say:

These are just some ideas. It is important that you only say what you believe, and use your own words.

- *'The way he treats you is wrong.'*
- *'What can I do to help you?'*
- *'How do you think his behaviour has affected you?'*
- *'How do you think his behaviour is affecting your children?'*
- *'I'm worried about what he could do to you or the children.'*
- *'What do you think you should do?'*
- *'What are you afraid of if you leave?'*
- *'What are you afraid of if you stay?'*

What not to do ...

- Don't blame her for the abuse or ask questions like *'what did you do for him to treat you like that?'* or *'why do you put up with it?'*, or *'how can you still be in love with him?'* These questions suggest that it is somehow her fault.
- Don't criticise her partner. Criticise the abusive **behaviour** and let her know that no-one has the right to abuse her (for example, say *'your partner shouldn't treat you like that'*). Criticism of her partner is only likely to make her want to defend him or her.
- Don't give advice, or tell her what you would do. This will only reduce her confidence to make her own decisions. Listen to her and give her information, not advice.
- Don't pressure her to leave or try to make decisions on her behalf. Focus on listening and supporting her to make her own decisions. She knows her own situation best. .5



MYTHS ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Myth: Domestic Violence (Date Violence) is not a wide spread problem.

Reality: *One in three women may be hit by a partner.*

Myth: A female is more likely to be attacked by a stranger than by her partner.

Reality: *Domestic Violence (Date Violence) is more common than violence against women in the street, pub or workplace.*

Myth: Domestic Violence (Date Violence) is a private matter. It is better to leave couples to sort out their differences in their own way.

Reality: *Violent crime is everybody's problem.*

Myth: It was a one-off it won't happen again.

Reality: *Violence against a partner is rarely a one-off incident. It usually forms part of a pattern of increasing abuse.*

Myth: Men who abuse their partners must be mentally ill.

Reality: *There is no direct link connecting domestic violence with mental illness. Violence against women is motivated by a desire to control and maintain power over a woman.*

Myth: Only certain types of men assault or abuse their partners.

Reality: *There is no typical abuser. Age, physical build, race or religion are not determining factors.*

Myth: Domestic Violence (Date Violence) is a momentary loss of self-control.

Reality: *Most domestic violence (date violence) is intentional. When abusive men hit their partners, they often aim at parts of the body where the bruises will not show.*

Myth: Domestic Violence (Date Violence) is caused by alcohol.

Reality: *Many men are violent towards their partners when they are sober. Alcohol certainly can be a contributing factor in violence but it is often just another excuse used by men to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.*

Myth: The woman must have done something to deserve it.

Reality: *No one deserves to be beaten or abused. Many abusive men persist in making irrational or excessive demands on their partners.*

Myth: Regret or remorse on the man's part means he has changed.

Reality: *Many men feel regret or remorse after hitting their partner. These feelings, apologies and promises to change, are part of the cycle. They do not indicate change.*