

When you hurt your partner you hurt your children:

A self-help guide for men who want to change.

HOW DOES MY BEHAVIOUR AFFECT OTHERS?

You may think domestic violence involves only two people – you and your partner. But it impacts on everyone in the family, especially your children. Some people think that children don't worry about adults fighting at home; that they'll soon forget things they see, like mum being hit or parents screaming and yelling at each other. But children don't forget! They suffer a lot of harm from living with violence. Some children, particularly older ones, may step in to try and help their mum and may try to restrain the violent partner. Children are often stunned into silence by what they see. Children tend to see the world as revolving around them. They may feel the violence is their fault; that they have caused it. They may feel guilty and confused about loving their dad, while at the same time not liking the violence.

Children know how they feel inside, but they may find it hard to tell adults because they may be too scared or because they do not know how to put their feelings into words. Children have no power to stop the violence happening. They have little choice but to live with it until one of the adults makes a decision to leave or change. Children learn that it's OK to hurt the people you love, and that violence is an OK way to handle conflict. Although children may not see the actual violence between their parents, they can sense the fear and the intimidation. This has serious effects on their wellbeing.

LOSING YOUR KIDS

Most men who get help to deal with their abusive behaviour tell us that their biggest fear is 'losing their kids': not so much physically losing them but losing them emotionally. They worry that their kids will resent them for their behaviour and won't want to maintain a relationship with them.

CHANGES IN YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR

Have you noticed that your child/children have started to display any of the following behaviours?

- increased anxiety/worry
- behaving in a nervous or withdrawn way
- having few interests, few social activities or not doing well at school
- bedwetting
- restlessness
- headaches, stomach cramps, asthma or stuttering
- being cruel to animals • acting aggressively when they play
- running away from home.

Patterns of violence and abuse are learned early on and can become a pattern for life. Perhaps you grew up in a violent family? As children grow up and start relationships of their own, they may act in the way they have learned. In this way, violent behaviour may be passed on from one generation to the next. Taking responsibility for your own violent behaviour and doing something about it means that you have a good chance of breaking this pattern. Your own sons and daughters will benefit from the choices YOU make now.

WHERE TO GET HELP

Getting help is a sign of strength and courage. Deciding to get help shows that you are ready to take control of your situation and take a positive step towards sorting things out.

24 HOURS MEN'S DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HELPLINE 1800 000 599 The Men's Domestic Violence Helpline is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call and talk anonymously to a trained professional, who will listen to you and give you some options on what you can do.

CRISIS CARE (24 hours) (08) 9223 1111 or free call 1800 199 008 OFFICE HOURS
The following organisations have offices and services across the State.

Centrecare (08) 9325 6644 Communicare (08) 9439 5707 Kinway (Anglicare WA) (08) 9263 2050 or STD free call 1800 812 511

Relationships Australia 1300 364 277

TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICES 131 450 Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For the cost of a local call, TIS helps people who do not speak English.