

ebook

Braidwood Says



**To Domestic
and
Family Violence**

raising awareness through education
advocating for a violence-free society

in partnership with Braidwood Life Centre

Braidwood Says NO to Violence

A group in association with Braidwood Life Centre

Domestic and Family Violence is often defined as an abuse of power perpetrated by a family member, intimate partner or former intimate partner, both in a relationship and after separation. People who use violence in the family seek to use power to dominate and control other individuals.

DFV is a pattern of controlling behaviours that a family member, intimate partner or ex-intimate partner uses to get power over the other. DFV is any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear and to be made to do things against their will.

Domestic violence is a leading cause of injury to women, and many cases go unreported.

If your friend were experiencing family violence, would you know how to help?

Violent Perpetrators in the family

As well as intimate partner and child abuse, DFV includes violence to parents, siblings and in-laws who may or may not live in the same home.

Any behaviour that is used to coerce, manipulate and control another through an abuse of power to cause fear, is an act of violence. Physical threats and acts are only one in a collection of tools perpetrators will use.

For the family where there is violent behaviour, children may show signs of distress, anger or self-blame which overflow into their behaviours at school or in recreational activities (eg. local sport). Violence at home can result in children growing up without learning about positive, respectful relationships, and have a downstream affect when they grow up to have their own families.

People who are involved with household conflict and break downs in family functioning, can often be the same people who are involved with broader community conflicts. Families may move homes a lot, or victims may not be able to attend work regularly. Over time, as the sense of self is diminished and self esteem wanes, employees may not be as functional at their jobs. Suicidal thoughts may arise.

Who is involved with DFV?

Domestic violence, child abuse, parent abuse and elder abuse are all part of family violence.

The abusive person could be anyone significant such as a current or past partner; child; brother or sister; parent; cousin; grandparent; someone the individual is caring for, or who is the carer for; or perhaps someone with a kinship or cultural duty towards.

A defining element of domestic violence is control and domination, and you may notice your friend unable to make choices or take action without 'permission' from a violent family member.

A person who is experiencing family violence may or may not show obvious signs of anxiety and fear. Individuals may or may not appear depressed, or express shame and anger.

Family Violence does not discriminate between gender, age, race, or socioeconomic status. Anyone can fall victim to DFV at any stage of life. Both men and women experience family violence, and either men or women may be perpetrators of violence.

When attempting to identify family violence in the life of someone you care about, red flags may include inappropriate use of drugs or alcohol (to block out pain), physical health problems, or suicidal thoughts. Of course, these symptoms can also occur when family violence is not present.

A community-wide issue

Statistics from [a 2018 Federal Publication](#) show that 1 in 6 women, and 1 in 16 men have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a cohabiting partner since age 15. Family, domestic and sexual violence is a major health and welfare issue that occurs across all ages, socioeconomic and demographic groups but mainly affects women and children.

DFV costs Australia \$21billion p/year and Australian Police respond to DFV nationally every 2 minutes. Family violence can happen to anyone in any neighbourhood or group. It hurts families, communities and individuals. DFV is everyone's problem.

The effects of DFV is a problem for everyone, even if you're not directly experiencing the behaviours in your own family or social circle. All members of the community are negatively affected by DFV.

Children and Women

A child is exposed to family violence if the child sees or hears family violence or otherwise experiences the effects. Safety and protection of family members, and particularly children, from the effects of family violence is central to a positive society.

Recent studies show that women and children are overwhelmingly the victims of DFV and those who use violence are overwhelmingly male. Women also commit DFV against men, as do same-sex partners. DFV can be perpetrated by a partner, family member, carer, house mate, boyfriend or girlfriend.

Intimate partner violence causes more illness, disability and deaths than any other risk factor for women aged 25–44. The risk of partner violence increases fivefold when a woman is pregnant.

It's surmised that at least half of the homeless women Australia-wide are fleeing Domestic Violence. With the knowledge that controlling behaviours become more frequent and dangerous overtime, keeping women and children safe is a priority.

A 2015 SafeHorizon paper reported that Domestic Violence is most likely to happen between 6pm and 6am. However, it's important to understand that DFV happens even when someone is not physically hurt. It happens at all times of the day, and not always behind closed doors.

Control and domination

Domestic and Family Violence is not accidental or random. DFV is a complex pattern of violent/abusive tactics, purposefully carried out for control.

Domestic Violence may occur even without physical abuse. Perpetrators seek to control and dominate family members through fear, manipulation and threats. A person does not need to be physically hit to experience Domestic and Family Violence.

A right to live without fear

The underpinning value in addressing Domestic and Family Violence in the community is acknowledging that DFV is a human rights issue. When we say No to Violence we are saying yes to all people having the right to

- live free from violence
- live free from the fear of violence
- live free from discrimination
- live free from torture
- have autonomy over their own bodies

Physical harm, rape or sexual abuse, damaging property, harming pets, stalking and threats to injure or kill are criminal offences. DFV can also be enacted in ways that may not be considered a criminal offence, such as emotional manipulation (gaslighting), financial control, although they are equally as damaging to the victim, other family members and the broader community.

The “Rule of Thumb”, comes from a history where domestic violence was acceptable within the legal system. An 18th century case in the US explains how a judge made allowance for a man to beat his wife, provided the stick was no thicker than the husband's own thumb. Draconian sentiments from the past, like this are the foundations for inequality and insecurity for women in violent relationships today. Now, in a more enlightened 2019, it is illegal for a man to physically harm his wife, including coercion to engage in sexual acts. In intimate partnerships, consent is still required.

Everyone has the right to be safe and not live in fear.

A right to freedom of thought

It is a Human Right to have freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to have (or not have) or to adopt a religion or belief of your choice. You also have the freedom to (or not to) worship individually or in community. It is not acceptable for anyone to control your spiritual or cultural choices.

Freedom of thought and conscience extends to non-religious beliefs including atheism, agnosticism, veganism and pacifism. You also have the right to change your beliefs or religion at any time, and to put your thoughts and beliefs into action.

As an element of this right, no one is to be subject to coercion which would impair their freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of choice. People have the right to use ritual and significant objects, the display of symbols, and the observance of holidays and days of rest for worship. Further customs may include such customs as the observance of dietary regulations, the wearing of distinctive clothing or headcoverings, participation in rituals associated with certain stages of life, and the use of a particular language customarily spoken by a group.

An extension of this right is that no one may be coerced or manipulated to practice a particular custom, religious or otherwise. The use of threat of physical force or emotional manipulation to compel believers or non-believers to adhere to particular beliefs is against the law in Australia. It is illegal for parents, partners or siblings to coerce family members to observe particular beliefs or customs.

Help is available

If you or someone you know feels scared or unsafe as a result of a family member or intimate partner's actions, you may wish to seek assistance. Family Violence doesn't always come in the form of physical threats, and behaviours become increasingly frequent and harmful.

If you are experiencing violence, remember, the violence is not your fault and you don't have to put up with it. Everyone has the right to respectful, loving family relationships and no one should live in fear. Talk to someone who is safe – do not try coping alone.

If someone you know is experiencing family violence listen to them, show them your support and help them contact a family violence service. In assisting a person who is subject to violence, safety is of utmost importance. For a person who has experienced a pattern of control and domination, autonomy must be upheld.

Categories of Violence

We focus on nine categories of violence that perpetrators use to control, coerce and dominate either an intimate partner (current or previous) or another member of their family.

Although only some of the types of violence are criminal offences, the ones that are not, have equally devastating effects on family members. Domestic and family violence results in significant social and economic costs to the community.

Physical harm, rape or sexual abuse, damaging property, harming pets, stalking and threats to injure or kill are criminal offences. Some categories of violence, although damaging are not criminal and therefore often remain unnoticed by authorities and even family friends.

The central feature of all forms of domestic and family violence is that they are always characterised by an abuse of power. All forms of domestic and family violence use disrespectful, intimidating, and often frightening behaviours to control and dominate.

Category 1 : Physical Violence

Physical Violence may be actual or threatened, causing pain, injury and/or fear that can be a single incident or a series of incidents that are located on a continuum of behaviours.

Some examples include direct assault on the body (strangulation or choking, shaking, eye injuries, slapping, pushing, spitting, punching, or kicking), use of weapons, smashing things, sleep and food deprivation, denying medical support or medications.

In Australia, 1 woman dies as a result of intimate partner violence each week. A 2014 study showed that women may experience more than 30 assaults before they seek help. Research has found that on average, a woman may leave and return to a violent family situation seven times before she leaves for ever. Leaving is a complex issue.

Violence and abuse may occur only once, can involve various tactics of subtle manipulation or may occur frequently while escalating over a period of months or years.

Category 2 : Sexual Violence

Sexual violence is a criminal act which includes actual or threatened sexual assault and the sexual abuse of children. It can be a single incident or a series of incidents that are located on a continuum of behaviours from sexual harassment to life-threatening rape.

Examples of sexual violence include rape, unwanted sex or sexual acts, as well as being made to watch pornography. Non-consensual sex in a marriage is still rape.

Category 3 : Emotional / Psychological Violence

Emotional / Psychological Violence involves manipulative behaviour used to coerce, control or harm another. Mental, psychological or emotional abuse can be verbal or nonverbal.

Examples include denying a person's reality, put downs, manipulation and humiliation. Undermining another person's self esteem is an act of emotional / psychological violence.

Someone who constantly compares the family member with others as evidence of them not being enough, or being less than, are examples of using psychological violence.

Gaslighting is a term coined to describe the act of undermining someone's sense of reality with the intention of making them doubt themselves. Often, this behaviour happens slowly and incrementally over time so that friends and other family may not notice the perpetrator's violence. Sometimes, friends may not notice, with the thought that the perpetrator is a 'bit of a control freak.' If you notice your friend's sense of self diminishing, this is a red flag to violent behaviour in the relationship.

“Silent Treatment” is another way perpetrator's will use violence to control the family member/inimate partner. A person who actively uses behaviour that makes the other person feel unsafe, insecure and powerless, is using coercion to manipulate the outcome of the other person's behaviour.

Gaslighting, silent treatment and emotional manipulation are damaging, yet unfortunately not a criminal offence. The outcome of this behaviour affects the entire community, with serious consequences for the family, and the wider society.

Category 4 : Cultural / Spiritual

Cultural / Spiritual Domestic and Family Violence occurs when an individual is harmed as a result of practices that are part of her or his culture, religion or tradition.

Examples include not allowing the person follow their own beliefs, forcing them to participate in spiritual or religious practice that they do not want to be involved with. Forcing children to be reared in a faith that the partner has not agreed to is also an act of intimate partner violence (even if the couple are no longer together).

Misusing religious or spiritual traditions to justify physical violence is against the law. Using threats, intimidation, and emotional violence are powerful tools in creating fear and control over a family member. A victim does not have to be physically hurt to be afraid.

Shaming, isolating and threatening poverty may be additional tools of the perpetrator who uses Cultural / Religious Violence. If a victim is told that their community (religious or otherwise) will no longer accept them, they may be fearful. Strategies of violence that do not involve physical assault can be sufficient to ensure ongoing control and domination by the user of violence. The belief, or threat, that they could be physically assaulted underlines the fear and disempowerment felt by victims, and strengthens the level of control placed over them.

Category 5 : Financial / Economic Violence

Financial abuse occurs when someone controls an individuals' financial resources without the person's consent or misuses those resources. It involves behaviours aimed at manipulating a person's access to finances, assets and decision-making that would otherwise foster dependence and autonomy.

For example, unfairly controlling household money and decisions around its use. A family member who takes or limits money in the household for the purpose of control and domination, is doing Financial Violence. Preventing a family member from seeking or holding employment, and therefore limiting personal sovereignty is an act of Financial Violence.

Economic abuse has been described as having three dimensions: economic control, economic exploitation and employment sabotage.

Within the Financial Violence category, the sub-category of Elder Financial Abuse is a growing concern in Australia. In particular, this is defined as the illegal or improper use of an older person's property, finances and other assets without their informed consent or where consent is obtained it is by fraud, manipulation or duress.

Signs of Financial Violence may not be easy to spot. If a family member is doing some of the mentioned behaviours below, these could be considered DFV Red Flags :

- controls your access to bank accounts or other money.
- refuses to contribute financially to you or the family.
- they don't provide enough money to cover living expenses.
- taking out loans or running up debts in your name.
- pressuring you to sign up for a loan.
- you have to get permission from another person to spend your own money.
- selling (or threatening to sell) your property without your permission.
- you are being made to feel like you are incompetent with money.

Financial abuse is often accompanied by anger, verbal abuse, or the threat of violence. As well as losing money, financial abuse can also cause social isolation, depression and anxiety. Financial hardship and dependence represent significant barriers to partners and family members from leaving violent relationships.

Category 6 : Verbal Violence

Verbal Violence is any words spoken, either actual or threatened, in private or in public (including through electronic means) designed to humiliate, degrade, demean, intimidate or subjugate an intimate partner, former intimate partner or other family member. This type of violence may also include threats of physical violence.

Put-downs, insults and shouting are all examples of Verbal Violence. If someone in your life 'calls you out' or blames you for not fixing family or community problems, with the intention of intimidating you, this is Verbal Violence. A family member who uses words or shouting that threaten your sense of safety is using Verbal Violence.

Although shouting at someone is not usually illegal, threatening to harm, injure or kill another person, or a pet, is a criminal offence.

Category 7 : Social Violence

Social Violence occurs as forced isolation from supportive family or friend networks. It may be actual or threatened and can include controlling where an individual goes and who they see.

If you're concerned about a friend who appears to seek permission from a partner or family member to attend social events, this may be a red flag that Social Violence is occurring. A friend who seems to drop out of social or family events may be under the control of a family member.

Monitoring where a person is when they're out, reading message on their phone, smashing phones and controlling who someone follows on social media are examples of Social Violence.

Humans have evolved in groups for safety and security. The fear of losing one's social network is a very real threat that can cause distress to a vulnerable person.

Category 8 : Stalking

Stalking is a criminal behaviour that is a form of Domestic and Family Violence between family members or intimate partners. Of course, stalking can also be unrelated to families and occurs when someone is harassing or threatening to another person, especially in a way that haunts the person physically or emotionally in a repetitive and devious manner.

Stalking happens when a person intentionally and persistently pursues someone against their will. It involves a pattern of suspicious or strange incidents. The stalker does this to control, intimidate and create fear in the person they are stalking. The person being stalked may feel like they are in danger.

Stalking of an intimate partner can take place during the relationship, with intense monitoring of the partner's activities. Or stalking can take place after a partner or spouse has left the relationship.

Examples of stalking include driving past, watching from parked cars, delivering or sending unwanted gifts, making repeated phone calls, sending numerous text messages and loitering near a person's home or workplace.

Cyber stalking is an increasing area of concern. Examples include leaving messages on social networking sites, such as Facebook or Instagram, as well as sending unsolicited pictures, or numerous emails.

Stalking limits a person's freedom and makes them feel they have lost control over their lives. Some people who have been stalked are forced to change their lives, including by moving house and changing jobs.

Remember that behaviour which makes you feel scared, unsafe or uncomfortable is never OK – even if the person says that they love you or that they're 'doing it because they love you'.

Category 9 : Technology Facilitated abuse

An emerging area of concern in family violence is the use of digital technology to threaten, harass, monitor and control another person remotely. A controlling family member could use mobile phone apps to track an individual, or monitor emails without permission. This form of violence is illegal.

Examples of Technology Facilitated Abuse, otherwise known as Cyber-Harassment or Cyber-Stalking, also include impersonating you online, spreading rumours, posting embarrassing or untrue information about you, and sharing intimate content. Constant messaging or texting in a way that makes you feel intimidated is a form of violence. Harassment and threats on social media or dating sites, and posting private information with the intention of humiliating, controlling or scaring a person are all forms of violence.

What can you do to help?

It is often important for people who experience family violence to have a safety plan, in case the violence escalates and life is threatened. When helping a friend, you may also suggest making contact with a domestic violence support service, Legal Aid or the police. For immediate help if someone is in danger, call 000.

If you are helping someone who's experiencing Family Violence, remember she/he is the expert. Someone who resides in an abusive home knows the situation better than you do, and has the best sense of whether the abuser will carry through on threats.

When encouraging a friend to seek assistance, respect their choices and be available as a compassionate ear. Encouraging autonomy can empower someone who has been controlled to have the confidence to leave and seek safety.

Be an active bystander : say No

Say no to violence.

Do not turn a blind eye. Be an active bystander and make it clear when you see damaging, coercive and manipulative behaviours, that it's not okay.

As a community we equally have a responsibility to work toward the prevention of domestic and family violence and to demonstrate the unacceptability of all forms of domestic violence.

We have the choice to promote a view that all forms of domestic and family violence are unacceptable, and that those who use violence should take responsibility for their behaviour. To ensure safety of the family, there are programs available to assist people who do violence to change their behaviour and become better versions of themselves.

We also have the choice as a community to work together to empower those affected by domestic violence. Domestic and family violence is widespread and complex, and impacts on the physical, emotional, social, financial wellbeing and safety of individuals in families.

Getting help if you're experiencing family violence

If you are experiencing family violence, there is help for you to be safe. There are both public and private resources for help or support. Each week in this column we offer a possible contact point.

- 1800RESPECT is a 24 hour national sexual assault, family and domestic violence counselling line for any Australian who has experienced, or is at risk of, family and domestic violence and/or sexual assault. 1800 737 732.
- What's OK at Home? Is a website for young people has been developed by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria. It has been designed to help people understand what family violence is, why it happens, how to recognise it and how to help others who are experiencing it. Woah.org.au
- If you are experiencing self hatred and suicidal thoughts, call Lifeline, who can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your State. Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can call 13 11 14.
- Relationships Australia support groups and counselling on relationships, and for abusive and abused partners. 1300 364 277.
- The Safe Relationships Project provides men and women who are experiencing domestic violence in same sex relationships with support, advocacy, referral and legal information. 1800 244 481.
- Men's Referral Service offers assistance, information and counselling to help men who use family violence. 1300 766 491 .
- The National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline is an Australia-wide telephone hotline for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability. 1800 880 052
- Daisy is an app developed to connect people experiencing violence or abuse to services in their local area. The app includes safety features to help protect your privacy. However, domestic violence service apps are only recommended to those who have safe and secure access to their phone. Search Daisy on the app store.
- Local therapist Hollie Bakerboljkovac at Braidwood Holistic Therapies is trained in DFV response, as well as working with men who do violence. 42438032 or admin@braidwoodholistic.com.au

About BSNTV

Braidwood Says No to Violence is a local group, aiming to address public bias and misunderstanding around Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

Under the auspice of the Braidwood Life Centre, BSNTV is dedicated to raising awareness within the community to highlight that Domestic and family violence, in any form, is not acceptable.

The group works on projects to raise awareness through education and publicity to advocate for a violence-free society. BSNTV works with other groups and businesses in Braidwood and surrounds to deliver resources to support locals to Say NO to Violence.

Focusing on Education

BSNTV previously hosted a series of “Champions Say No to Violence” sessions about Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

The free educational sessions explored cultural expectations and public biases, myths and relational discrepancies that are prevalent in our society. Attendees were taught foundational principles to recognise, respond and refer friends or acquaintances who are experiencing intimate partner or family violence.

Out of the sessions, attendees identified a need for broader community education about the types of violence that are prevalent in DFV, in order to begin to break down the false assumptions and social taboos that limit public conversation. BSNTV acts from the premise that the right to live free from violence is a fundamental and core human right.

In response to the identified needs, a series of newspaper articles, written by the BSNTV Chair, Hollie Bakerboljkovac, were published in the Braidwood Times, over the 2019-20 Summer. This paper adapts those articles.

We offer this paper as a free resource to broaden community awareness around the complex issue of DFV.