

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE?

There are many types of domestic and family violence. It is defined as “violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or cause fear. It doesn’t have to be physical abuse. It can be emotional, psychological, financial, sexual or other types of abuse” (NSW Government - *Domestic Violence*).

Domestic violence can affect anyone - regardless of gender, sexual identity, race, age, culture, ethnicity or economic status. It affects people of all religions and none. There are victims and survivors of domestic violence in all of our churches.



SEEKING HELP

In the case of an emergency call 000 for police or ambulance.

Other national and state wide contacts include:

- **Domestic Violence Line:**
(NSW Department of Family and Community Services)
The DV line is free and staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week.
Ph: 1800 65 64 63.
- **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732):**
National Sexual Assault, Family & Domestic Violence Counselling Line.
24 hours, 7 days a week.
Ph: 1800 737 732

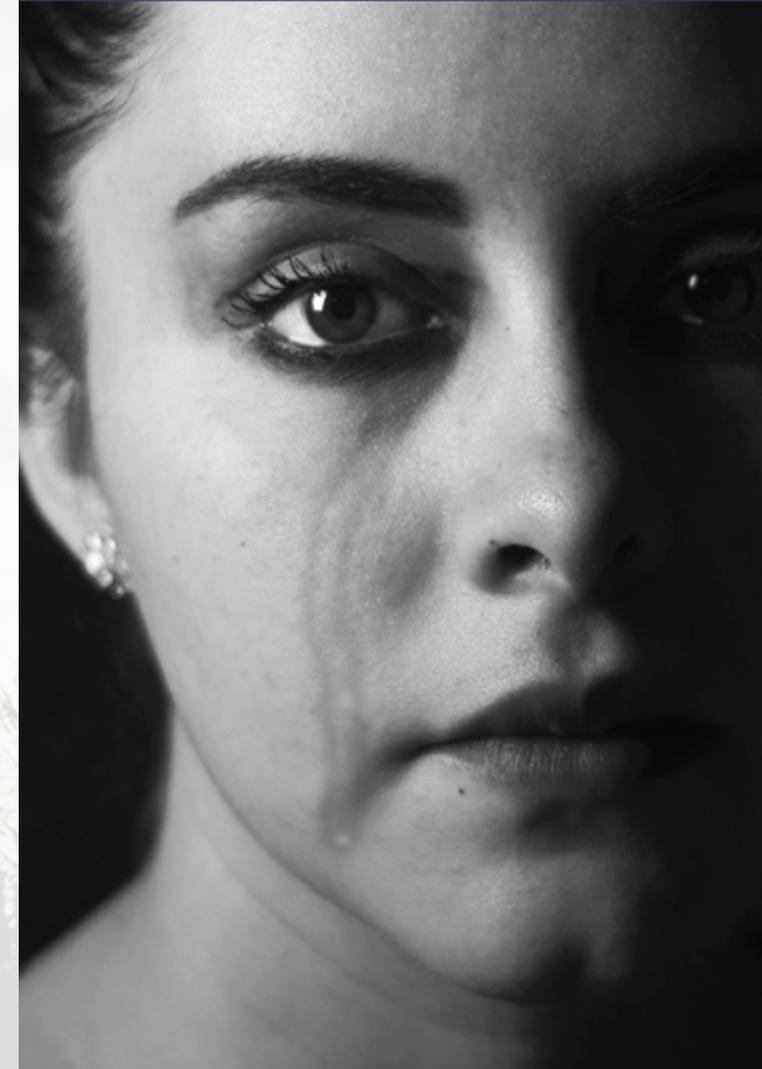
Other services are listed on the Church resource “Standing Against Family and Domestic Violence” available from your church or the NSW Ecumenical Council - Ph 02 9299 2215.

You may also choose to speak with someone you trust, such as priest, minister or pastor.



Prepared by the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle Working Group on Domestic Violence

THE BIBLE AND FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT WE ARE WORTHY OF RESPECT AND LOVE

The Bible tells us that men and women are created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27). This means that we are each endowed with an inherent dignity and are all worthy of respect.

Jesus said: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10b). Here Jesus offers the gift of a quality of life that is enriching and where our spiritual, physical and social needs are met.

St John writes that “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love” (1 John 4:8). This tells us not only about what God is like, but also reminds us of our calling to truly love one another.

Tragically, many people do not experience the fullness of life that these verses affirm. Instead, many women, children and men suffer from domestic violence and abuse.

THE BIBLE DOES NOT JUSTIFY DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Domestic and family violence is both a sin and a crime.

Too often perpetrators misuse passages of Scripture to justify their violent behaviour. This is a dangerous and distorted interpretation of the Bible. To misuse the Scriptures in this way is wrong and is in itself another form of abuse.

Don't I have to submit to my husband given he is the head of the family?

Men who abuse often use Ephesians 5:22–23 completely out of context. These verses read: “Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church...” However, if we read on and properly understand what St Paul is saying, we see that the passage as a whole refers to the mutual submission of husband and wife in self-giving love. Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church.

Whatever understanding one has of the roles of a husband and wife in our contemporary setting, there is never any justification for one person to engage in violent or abusive behaviour toward the other.

Isn't divorce a sin?

People who abuse sometimes try to manipulate their victims by suggesting that divorce or separation is in every circumstance sinful. However, any person who has perpetrated violence and abuse in the family home has already broken the marriage vows. It is this violence that is responsible for the ending of the relationship. Violence and abuse, not divorce, break up a marriage.

While we uphold the sanctity of marriage, this commitment should never be used as leverage or justification to keep someone in an unsafe relationship.

Don't I have to forgive my abuser?

Some perpetrators of abuse claim that the Bible requires their victim to forgive them (see, for example, Luke 17:3–4). However, forgiveness does not mean forgetting the abuse occurred or pretending that it hasn't happened. Nor is forgiveness to be understood as permission for the abuser to repeat the abuse.

There is a big difference between being repentant and being remorseful. Perpetrators often express remorse following abusive behaviour. This remorse may be genuine. However, repentance is much more significant. It requires change. True repentance involves a genuine commitment to never again engage in abusive behaviour.

It is also possible to forgive someone whilst simultaneously removing oneself from the abusive relationship. No person should ever feel obliged to remain in an unsafe relationship – even where the perpetrator has expressed regret or remorse for their behaviour.

Domestic and family violence is always wrong and can never be justified. We have a responsibility to stand together to oppose it in all its forms.

