

Myths & Truths

Society perpetuates many myths about domestic abuse, based on false assumptions and beliefs

Myths about domestic abuse

- Domestic abuse mainly happens in poor or underprivileged families
- Women with poor educations are more likely to experience domestic abuse
- Women seek out abusive relationships
- Women often deserve or orchestrate abusive episodes because they enjoy the drama
- Women who experience domestic abuse always have self-esteem or co-dependency issues
- The best protection for women against domestic abuse is to be married
- Women use refuges mainly to get re-housed
- Most domestic abuse is reciprocal with both partners using violence
- Most domestic abuse incidents are alcohol fuelled
- It is hopeless trying to help abused women because they always forgive / drop charges / give it another go
- Victims are weak

Truths about domestic abuse

- No person deserve to be abused
- Victims are never responsible for abuse perpetrated upon them – the responsibility always lies with the perpetrator
- Domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of their marital status, religion, economic background, age or ability
- Statistics dictate that the majority of victims are women – and the majority of perpetrators are men
- Domestic abuse is not about anger, loss of control, drug/alcohol abuse, money problems, career problems or stress – although these things may act as a catalyst. It is always about power and control.

More truths about domestic abuse

There are two people in every relationship

- The victim makes up half of an abusive relationship and is therefore jointly responsible for how it progresses (but not responsible for the abuse)
- To some extent, the victim's responses and reactions to abuse will dictate whether the abuse continues or stops

All human beings are entitled to the same rights as every other human

- Humans have the right to be safe from violence and abuse
- Humans have the right to be safe in their own homes
- Humans should not be abused by those they trust and love
- Humans should not be subjected to an abuse of power and control

(The same applies to animals – change the word “humans” to “animals” and it will still be true.)

4. Victims remain responsible for the safety and wellbeing of their children

- Children are our most vulnerable members of society
- Victims have a duty to protect children from overhearing, witnessing or experiencing abuse
- Victims have a duty to provide positive examples of parenting, relationships, personal boundaries and dealing with conflict

5. You cannot force change in others, only in yourself

- Abusers may never change
- Even if an abuser wants to change this may not be possible – or be a long and difficult process
- Victims may not be able to change their partners, but they can change their responses to domestic abuse

6. Victims have options and choices

- They do not have to stay “stuck” in an abusive relationship
- There are a range of support services, legal and housing options available
- Victims are not be forced to make choices before they are ready (although agencies have a duty to protect children)

7. Help and support is available

- There are 24-hour helplines and many websites to inform and support victims
- There are specialist workers and group programmes available
- There are refuges and emergency accommodations available
- Police, the criminal justice system, housing and other agencies have a duty to protect and help victims

8. There is life after domestic abuse

- All partners are not the same – not all partners are abusive
- Victims can become survivors and create happy futures
- Victims can recover from their experiences