

Fact Sheet 1 Forms of family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is pattern of behaviours intended to coerce, control and create fear within an intimate or familial relationship.

It is critical that service providers recognise that family and domestic violence can take many forms in order to identify it and respond effectively.

Many abusive tactics correspond with more than one category, for example, threats to harm can be described as emotional, verbal or physical abuse. However, all forms of family and domestic violence are implicitly emotionally violent and controlling.

The categories of family and domestic violence (Table 1) are commonly used, but should not be regarded as definitive or exclusive, and those experiencing them might see them as interchangeable or inseparable.

Table 1: Forms of family and domestic violence

| Form | Examples |
|--|--|
| <p>Emotional violence</p> <p>Emotional violence is behaviour that does not accord equal importance and respect to another person's feelings, opinions and experiences. Even though emotional abuse can have a profound and long-term impact on victims it is often the most difficult form of violence to identify. Many emotionally abusive behaviours are not crimes, and therefore victims can find it challenging to obtain protection.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deliberately undermining the victim's confidence; • acts that humiliate or degrade; • threats to harm themselves, the victim or another family member; • threats to report the victim to authorities such as Centrelink, Immigration or Child Protection; • verbal putdowns; • questioning the victim in a hostile way; • ridicule and shaming aspects of a woman's being such as her body, beliefs, skills, friends, occupation or cultural background; and • handling guns or other weapons in front of the victim. |
| <p>Physical violence</p> <p>Physical violence is any actual or threatened attack on another person's physical safety and bodily integrity. In addition to threatened or actual harm to people, it includes harming or threatening to harm pets or possessions.</p> <p>NB: Acts can be physically abusive even if they do not result in physical injury.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • smashing property, destroying possessions and throwing things; • using intimidating body language such as angry looks, threatening gestures and raised voice; • harassing the victim by making persistent phone calls, sending text messages or emails; • following her, or loitering near her home or workplace; • recklessly driving a vehicle with a victim and/or child in the car; • pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, choking, hair-pulling, punching or using weapons; and • murder. |

Sexual violence

Sexual violence is any actual or threatened sexual contact without consent, such as unwanted touching, rape, exposure of genitals and making someone view pornography against their will. Women with disabilities are believed to experience higher levels of sexual violence – such as unwanted touching by a carer (Salthouse & Frohmader 2004). While some forms of sexual violence are criminal acts, for example, sexual assault and rape, many other forms – such as using degrading language – are not.

- rape, including being forced to perform unwanted sexual acts, or to have sex with others;
- pressuring someone to agree to sex;
- unwanted touching of sexual or private parts;
- causing injury to the victim's sexual organs;
- disclosing intimate knowledge, including threatening to share private photographs or information about sexual orientation to generate fear; and
- expecting a woman to have sex as a form of reconciliation after using violence against her (because in these circumstances she is unable to withhold consent for fear of further violence).

Social violence

Social violence is behaviour that limits, controls or interferes with a woman's social activities or relationships with others, such as controlling her movements and denying her access to family and friends.

- excessive questioning;
- monitoring movements, internet use and social communications;
- being aggressive towards men who are viewed as 'competition', and acts of jealousy;
- isolating the victim from her social networks and supports, either by preventing her from having contact with her family or friends or by verbally or physically abusing her in public or in front of others;
- preventing the victim from having contact with people who speak her language and/or share her culture; and
- spreading lies about the victim through her support networks in order to discredit her.

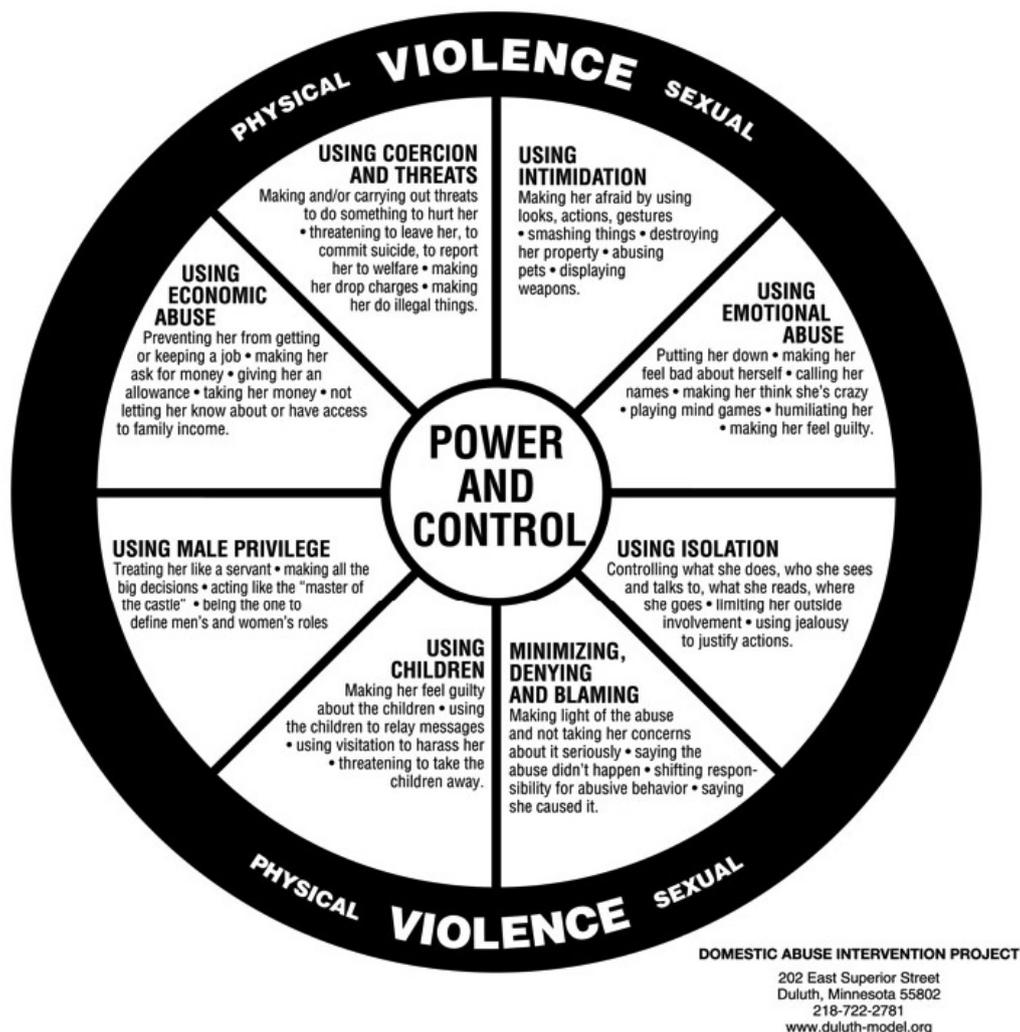
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|---|---|
| <p>Financial violence</p> <p>Financial violence includes not giving a woman access to her share of the family's resources, expecting her to manage the household on an impossibly low amount of money and/or criticising and blaming her when she is unable to, monitoring her spending, and incurring debts in her name.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • denying the victim access to money, including her own; • demanding that the family live on inadequate resources; • incurring debts in the victim's name; • making significant financial decisions without consulting the victim; • selling the victim's possessions; and • stealing money. |
| <p>Spiritual violence</p> <p>Spiritual violence is any behaviour that denigrates a woman's religious or spiritual beliefs, or prevents her from attending religious gatherings or practising her faith. It also includes harming or threatening to harm women or children in religious or occult rituals, or forcing them to participate in religious activities against their will.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ridiculing or putting down the victim's beliefs and culture; • preventing the victim from belonging to or taking part in a group or ceremony that is important to her spiritual beliefs, or practicing her religion; and • manipulating religious teachings or cultural traditions to excuse the violence. |
| <p>Other controlling behaviour</p> <p>Some men control women in ways that do not fit the above descriptions or are not - on the surface - violent, but still deny a woman's right to autonomy and equality.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dictating what the victim does, who she sees and talks to, or where she goes; • preventing the victim from going to work; • not allowing the victim to express her own feelings or thoughts; • refusing to give the victim any privacy; • forcing the victim to go without food or water; • depriving the victim of sleep; and • loitering around places the victim is known to frequent, watching her, following her, making persistent telephone calls and sending mail including unwanted love letters, cards and gifts. |

Power and Control

The Duluth Model is the most widely adopted model of family and domestic violence. It was developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota in the United States following consultation with over 200 women about their experiences of family and domestic violence (Pence & Paymar 1986).

The *Power and Control Wheel* (Fig. 1) provides a model for understanding the violence is part of a pattern of interchangeable and reinforcing behaviours, rather than isolated incidents of abuse.

Figure 1: The Power and Control Wheel (Pence & Paymar 1986)



References

Pence E & Paymar M 1986, *Power and Control: Tactics of men who batter*, Minnesota Program Development Inc., Duluth, Minnesota.

Salthouse S & Frohmader C 2004, 'Double the Odds' – Domestic Violence and Women with Disabilities, paper presented to the 'Home Truths' Conference, 15–17 September 2004, Southgate, Melbourne.