

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

AUSTRALIA SAYS NO

Information for young people, parents and the community on identifying and avoiding abusive and violent relationships and where to find help.

Contents

About this booklet	3
No respect, no relationship	4
It's not okay	6
Breaking the cycle of violence	8
Talk to someone	10
When you call the Helpline	10
It's a crime.....	12
Communicate	14
Parents can help.....	16
What parents can do.....	18
How to get help	19



Good relationships make a great community

The Australian Government believes that families are the backbone of a strong and healthy community, and loving supportive relationships are at the heart of happy, well functioning families. Families are the best places for children to learn about love and respect, and how to build and maintain healthy and caring relationships.

Relationships founded on fear and violence cannot sustain or nurture either partner or the family they might hope to raise. Tragically, when a young person's early relationship experiences include violence and sexual assault, the consequences can resonate beyond the immediate feelings of hurt and confusion.

These experiences can destroy an individual's sense of self-worth. Some come to accept violence as the norm, thinking they deserve no better. Violence can become a learnt behaviour, destroying people's capacity to form healthy relationships, now and in the next generation.

When parents talk to their children about what makes a good relationship it helps young people develop and clarify their own values. It can provide an opportunity for children to talk about things which might be worrying or confusing them.

This booklet is a resource for young people, parents, friends and the community at large. It provides information on how to identify and avoid violent and abusive situations, how to build and maintain healthy relationships and who to contact if you need protection or advice.

It is not the role of government to tell people how to live their lives – relationships are personal and private. But violence against women is unacceptable. It diminishes the lives of all those it affects and it tarnishes any community that tolerates it.

John Howard
Prime Minister



About this booklet

This booklet is part of a national campaign to Eliminate Violence Against Women. It aims to raise young people's awareness about the harm caused when personal relationships become violent. The booklet also provides information about who to contact for help and advice if you, or someone you know, is being abused.

The personal stories in this booklet are based on people's real life experiences. Events like this are happening in our community – in the home, in the workplace, in those places we relax and have fun. Places where we should feel safe. The people in the photographs used in this booklet are models.

The booklet complements the campaign appearing on television, radio and in magazines. It seeks to encourage families and friends to talk about relationships and provides information to help identify when people, especially young people, might be involved in violent, or potentially abusive, situations.

To ensure support is available for those experiencing violence, a 24-hour Confidential Helpline has been established. When you call the Helpline on 1800 200 526 you can have a confidential discussion with an experienced counsellor. Contact details can be found at the end of this booklet.

Funding for the campaign is provided under Partnerships Against Domestic Violence and the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault. It is part of the Australian Government's \$73.2 million commitment to address domestic and family violence and sexual assault in Australia.

The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, Senator the Hon Kay Patterson, is responsible for implementing these two key programmes, which are administered by the Australian Government's Office of the Status of Women.

The Australian Government thanks those organisations who kindly provided material for inclusion in this booklet.

No respect No relationship

We look for relationships so that we can share part of our lives. In a good relationship the partners support each other, sharing the good times and helping each other through the tough ones.

When someone matters deeply to us, and those intense feelings of love and respect are returned, it enables us to face the world with confidence.

Things will not always go smoothly. Building and maintaining a healthy

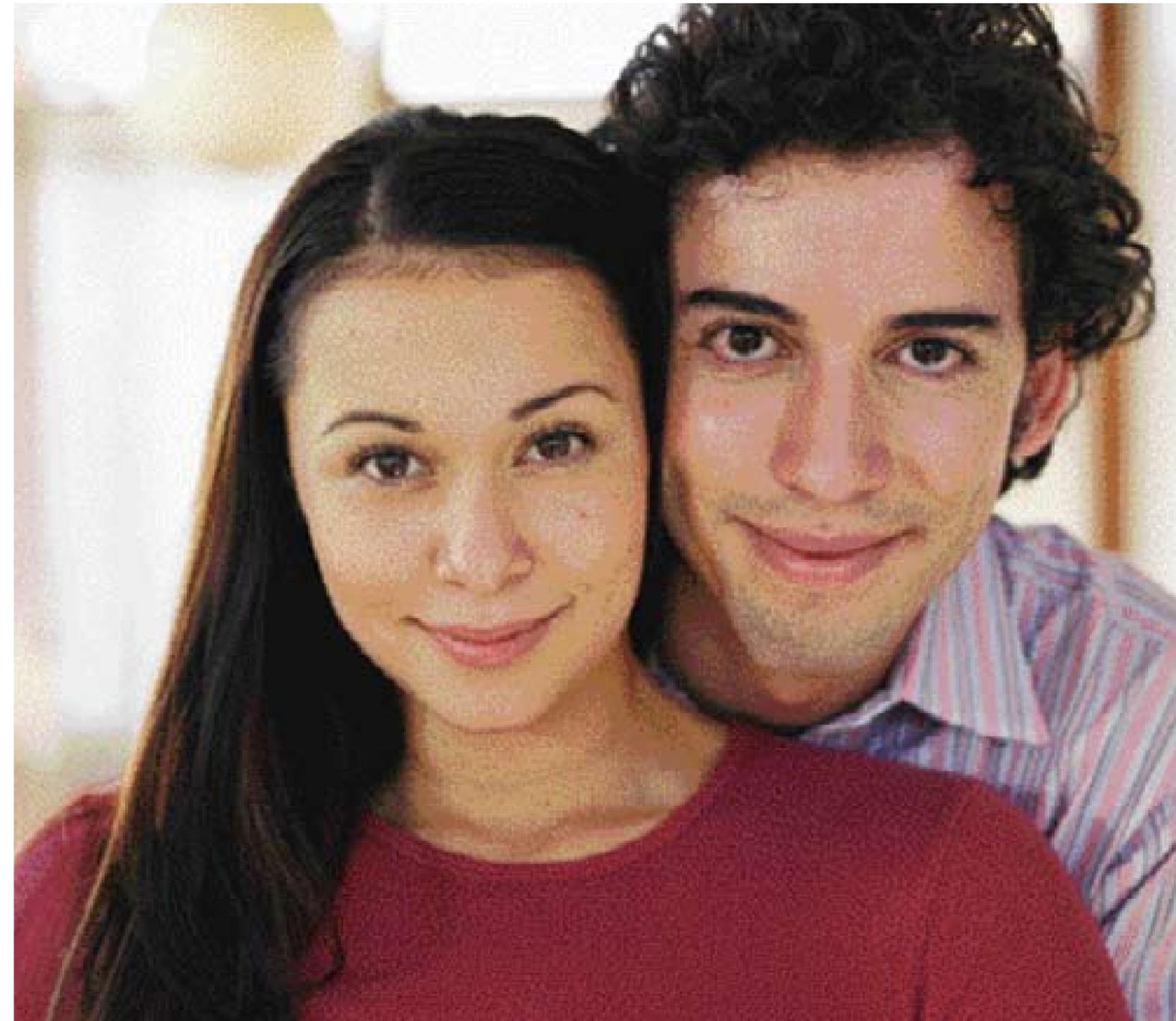
relationship needs a commitment from both partners to work at it.

But it is worth it, because in a good relationship people feel good about their partner and good about themselves.

Not all relationships work that way, no matter how much we might want them to. When there is violence or intimidation the relationship can become very destructive and physically and emotionally dangerous.

While every person's experience of an abusive relationship will be different, there are some common patterns of controlling behaviour and abuse, which are often evident before the relationship becomes physically violent:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Possessiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• checking on their partner all the time to see where they are, what they're doing and who they're with• trying to restrict where they can go and who they can see |
| Jealousy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• accusing their partner of being unfaithful or flirting without good reason• isolating their partner from family and friends, often by rude and objectionable behaviour |
| Put Downs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• humiliating their partner, either publicly or privately by attacking their intelligence, their looks or capabilities• constantly comparing their partner unfavourably with others• blaming the partner for all the problems in the relationship |
| Menace & Threats | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• yelling, sulking and deliberately damaging things that are of importance to their partner• threatening to use violence against their partner, the partner's family, friends or even a pet |

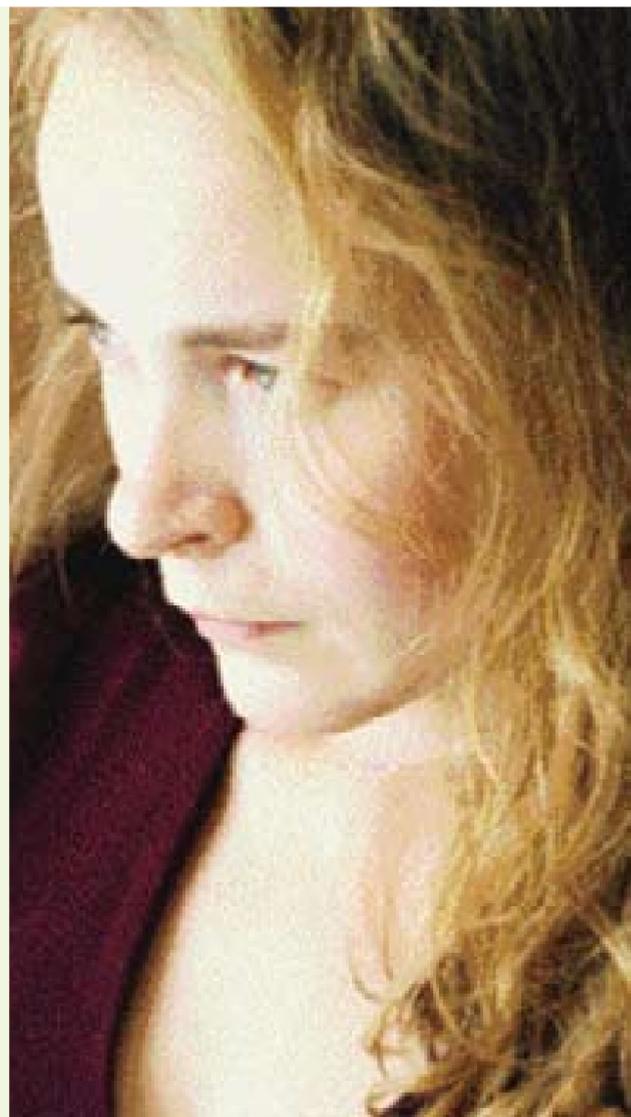


It's not OK

It's not OK to be physically threatened or scared into things which make you uncomfortable or unhappy, just because you are in a relationship.

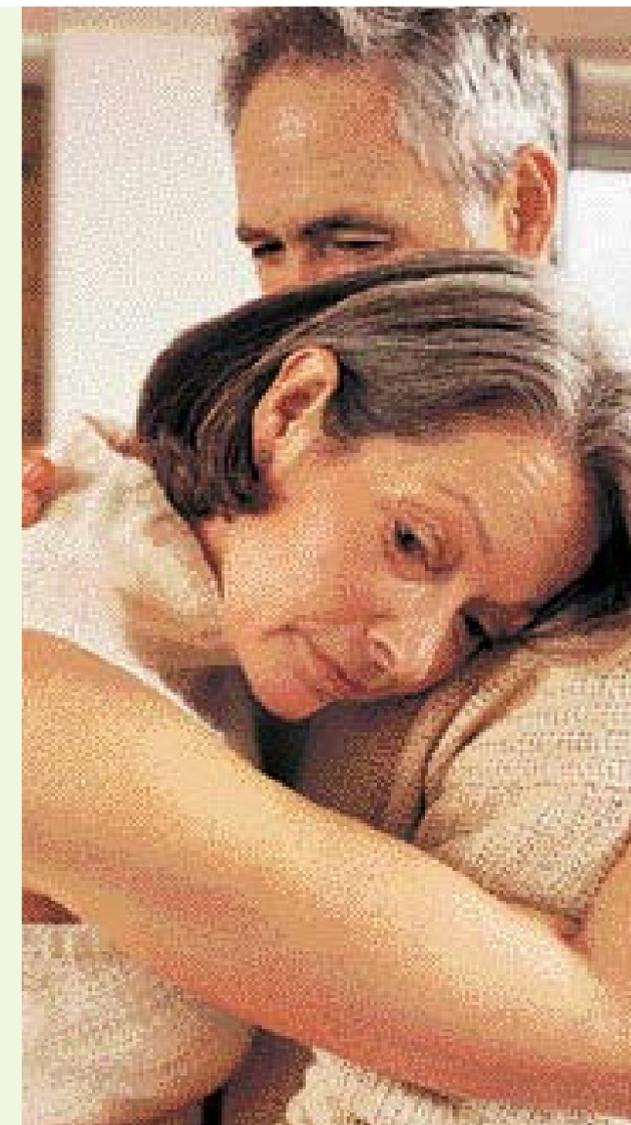
Caroline's Story

I was with my boyfriend Matt for a year and a half. At first, I thought he was 'the one' – we used to have such a great time when we went out together and he was always telling me how special I was. But then he changed. He'd get really paranoid and jealous and think I was cheating on him. He was always yelling at me. After a while it felt like I couldn't do anything right, he was angry with me all the time. One time after we'd been to a party we had a huge fight. He said I'd been coming on to one of his mates, and he slapped me hard across the face. After that, it got worse. Mum was really worried about me. I tried to make excuses for Matt but she said it was Matt who had the problem. My best friend told me the same thing. I talked to a counsellor and she explained that if I was so special to him then he wouldn't hurt me. If he really cared about me, he wouldn't hit me. I have a new boyfriend now. He really respects me. Sure we argue sometimes. But we have a great relationship where we can both talk about things honestly. It feels good and I feel good.



Sharon and Dave's Story

It all started a couple of months after our daughter Emma had started seeing Michael. We didn't like him because we thought that he was too possessive. She stopped seeing her friends so she could be with him, but he would still get jealous, and yell at her if she did something he didn't like. We found it difficult to talk to her about it – when we said something, she would say he only got jealous because he loved her. We didn't want to interfere, because we didn't want her to sneak around and see him without us knowing, but the whole relationship just didn't seem right. His behaviour was having an impact on the whole family. His angry moods got worse, and one day she came back from a weekend away with cuts and bruises. After that we called a relationship counselling line, and they really helped. They helped with ways to approach Emma and talk to her about Michael's abusive behaviour, and help her understand that she wasn't to blame for his actions. When Emma broke it off, we helped by taking his phone calls for her. Now things are back to normal – Emma feels good about herself and is doing really well at uni.



It's not OK to be put down and pushed around – shoved, hit, slapped, kicked, punched. No one deserves to be treated this way. No one should use violence – or the threat of violence – to make you do what you don't want to do.

It's not OK for someone to use the excuse that they are tired, stressed, over worked or under financial pressure as a reason for their violent behaviour.

Breaking the cycle of violence

A violent relationship may not be violent all the time. Some of the time, violent people treat their partners very well. They can be very loving and sorry for their violent behaviour. It can make it hard to see what's really happening. There is a strong chance that the violence will get worse over time and the relationship more abusive.

After a violent incident, it's common for both the abusive partner and the victim to try and make it OK – make excuses, apologise, promise to change. But there is no excuse for this behaviour and just saying sorry is not good enough. Sometimes the violent person will blame the victim – “it wouldn't happen if you did what I said”.

Things may settle down for a while – the abuser may feel guilty, the victim may try to go along with whatever they want. Usually it's only a matter of time before the build-up to violence starts again.

For someone who is experiencing violence in a relationship, things can feel very confusing, especially if this is their first relationship. They may try to make excuses, think of it as an isolated incident or something that only happened because their partner was drunk or stressed. They may not be sure what behaviour to expect from a partner.

People subject to violent abuse can begin to think that the violence is their fault. They might start to try to fit in with whatever their partner wants, even if it makes them uncomfortable. They might feel scared that their partner will hurt them if they try to leave.

Sophie's Story

I had a close friend in school called Rachel. We were quite good friends through school and uni, where she met Marcus. He was a popular guy but had a violent temper. It became pretty clear that he was knocking her around. The stories she'd make up to explain the bruises were pathetic. She was always making excuses for him. She was a really bright girl but when Marcus dumped her she just went to pieces. She dropped out of uni and ended up living with Ian. Ian was just like Marcus. Somehow she seemed to think she didn't deserve any better. It was impossible to see her without Ian being around and he was so rude. I guess I just gave up and we lost touch.

I heard from one of our other school friends that Ian just got more and more violent. But Rachel just couldn't bring herself to leave him – the last beating was so bad she ended up in hospital. I never had the courage to talk to her about Marcus or Ian's abusive behaviour. I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I had. Maybe I could have encouraged her to talk to the police or a counsellor about what was happening. Maybe I should have tried to make her understand that she wasn't the problem – that she didn't deserve to be treated like that, and most men are not like that.



Breaking up any kind of relationship is hard to do, but it can be particularly hard to leave a violent boyfriend or partner.

When you are frightened and your self-esteem is low, it can be hard to find the strength to leave. It's sometimes easier to hope that things will change for the better. Too often they don't.

But the first step in changing things is

to understand what's been happening is wrong. Even if your boyfriend or partner says they care about you and you care about them, it's not OK to be treated like this.

Talk to someone

Listen to your feelings and trust them – if something doesn't feel right, it probably isn't. Talk to someone who cares about you. Talk to your Mum or Dad, a family member, a friend, or someone in your community like your doctor, your teacher, your local religious leader, or call the campaign Helpline for confidential advice.

Find someone you trust and tell them about what's happening to you. Don't feel ashamed or embarrassed.

You are not responsible for somebody else's violent behaviour. Your first responsibility is to yourself – get safe and stay safe.

If you want to talk to someone about your relationship or you want help to get safe, the contact points provided in this booklet will help you find the right person to give you support.

When you call the Helpline

- Your call will be answered by a person, no answering machines, no recorded messages.
- The person who answers your call will be an experienced counsellor, not the police, not a government department.
- You will not have to give your name.
- Anyone who is concerned can call this Helpline.
- You can request a male or female counsellor.
- After talking with you about your concerns, the counsellor may offer to put you in touch with another organisation that can provide ongoing help or support.

Josie's Story

Like many counsellors, I work with people who are experiencing domestic and sexual abuse, or have experienced abuse in the past. They are just normal people, experiencing bad relationships. Often, people will seek help once things get physically violent. But there are warning signs – like intense jealousy, yelling, constant put-downs and threatening violence – that can indicate things are getting out of hand.

I help people build skills to maintain healthy relationships, where both parties can communicate well. If someone has been a victim of violence, I try hard to reinforce that they are not responsible for abusive behaviour – only the abusive person is.

When people come to see me I try to give them options – sometimes I help them explain what has happened to the police

or arrange counselling – but whatever steps are taken, it's always their choice.

We like to think that only a stranger would hurt us, but the saddest thing is that the majority of sexual assaults are perpetrated by someone the victim knew, somewhere they thought they would be safe – in their home, at a friend's place, at work, at the local club or pub.

So often the violence is hidden. Friends and family suspect something is wrong, but can't be sure. I think that if someone is experiencing violence or has been assaulted, the best thing they can do is talk to someone about it, someone they trust. My job is to help people find a way to talk about what is happening. And talk through the ways they can change that situation.



It's a crime

It can be hard to accept that someone you care about has deliberately hurt you. We're not just talking about hitting. Abuse can also include using force or fear to make you do things that you don't want to do.

Perhaps more than at any other time in our lives, it is during adolescence and the early adult years that we seek out new experiences which help us understand who we are and what we want.

Sometimes this can involve getting caught up in high-risk situations.

Forcing someone to have sex when they don't want to, or forcing them into having sex by making them think they will be harmed if they don't, is a serious criminal offence.

- The definitions and labels differ slightly – in some states this offence is called 'rape', in others it is called 'sexual assault', 'sexual intercourse without consent' or 'sexual penetration without consent'.
- 'Sexual assault' in everyday language is a general term, which includes rape, but also other offences such as indecent assault.
- Sexual assault does not necessarily involve violence, for example it can be touching a person in a sexual way without the person's consent.

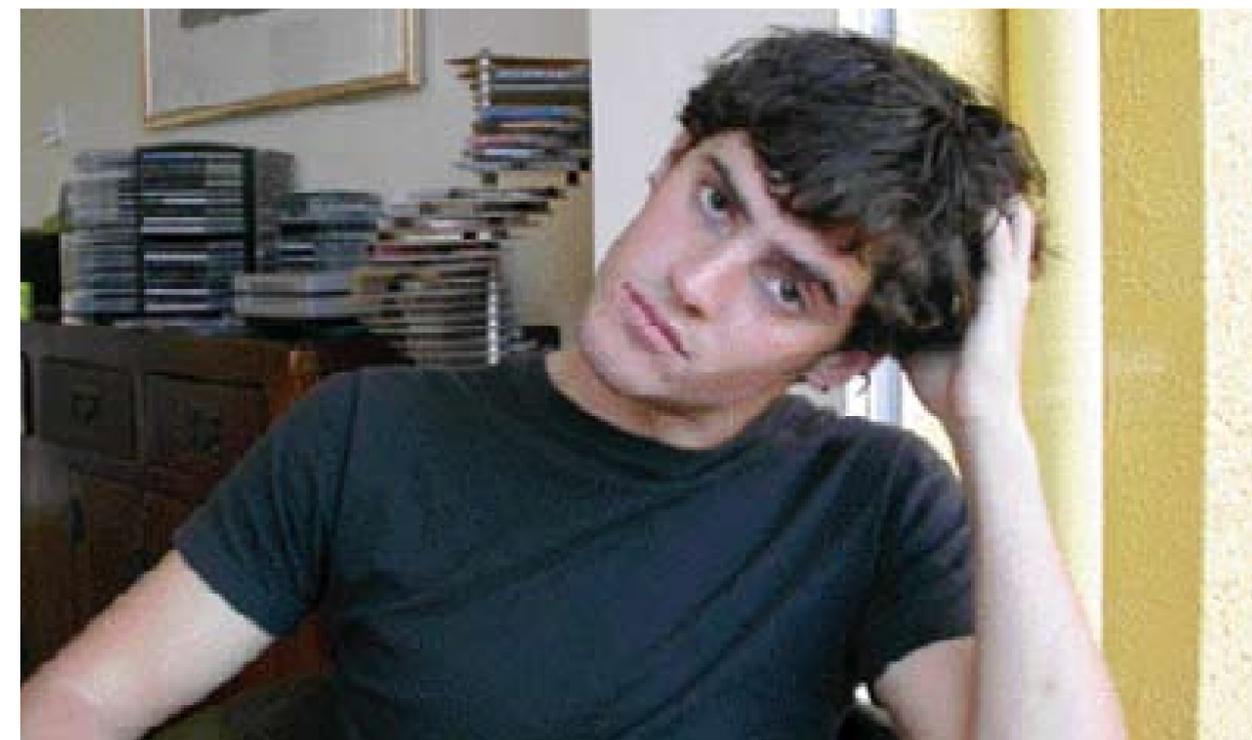
Sexual assault and violence against women is a significant problem.

Surveys have highlighted two disturbing facts:

- Only twenty percent of sexual assaults on women are reported to police.
- Fifty-eight percent of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim.

The figures quoted are taken from the Australian Bureau of Statistics - *Crime and Safety* survey - conducted in early 2002 reporting on experiences for the most recent incident over the preceding 12 months. This is the most recent, relevant survey.

No means no



Brett's Story

The police say they are going to charge me with sexual assault.

I met Julia at a party – I really liked her. We started going out but she was pretty old-fashioned about sex and stuff. I guess I was a bit more experienced than her. She said she didn't want to go too far. It really bugged me that she got to make all the decisions. Sure she had said "no" that night when I finally went all the way. But I just thought if she was really my girlfriend

and really cared about me she could do what I wanted for a change. Afterwards, she was really upset and crying, but I thought she'd get over it. She told her parents and they went to the police.

I've tried to explain that I was pretty drunk, but the police say that's no excuse. My mum is taking me to see a counsellor for guys. But I am really scared about what's going to happen.

Being someone's boyfriend doesn't give you the right to decide what they should do. And nothing gives you the right to use force.

Communicate

Communication is key for all relationships. Surveys report that boys in particular are anxious about communication. Many feel that they need to “have a few drinks” before they are able to talk to girls. Sometimes they might need help to find more positive ways to handle shyness and the fear of rejection.

Without communication there can be no real relationship. If communication is poor or not valued, negotiating the boundaries of the relationship will be difficult, if not impossible.

Poor communication can lead to conflicting expectations, especially about sex. Sex without consent is sexual assault - there is no room for confusion.

Stay safe and play it safe

Sadly, most violence against women occurs within a relationship – that’s why learning how to build healthy relationships is so important. But trouble can happen outside relationships – with strangers or people you don’t know well.

Have some transport plans to make sure you can get there and back safely.

Let someone know (parents, brother/sister, housemate) where you are going, and when you’ll be home. If your plans change let them know.

We have all heard or read about horrible cases where young people find themselves in terrifying situations completely outside their control.

Alcohol and sex can be a dangerous mix. If you are not in control of yourself, you won’t be able to control the situation.

Think about the things you can do to keep safe and out of trouble.

Remember if you are so drunk that you don’t know if the other person is consenting – stop. It could be rape. When you know that the other person is so drunk they may not be capable of giving consent – don’t do it – because this would be rape.

Plan to go out and hang out in a group. Go with people you feel safe with and who you know have your best interests at heart.

Look out for yourself and your friends – good friends make sure that their friends are safe and make safe choices.

Agreeing to one type of activity such as kissing doesn’t mean there is a ‘green light’ for other sexual contact – remember it’s OK to change your mind and say “no” at any stage.

Don’t be alone and isolated with someone you don’t know well.

If you start to feel uncomfortable, go with your feelings, and get to a safe place as fast as you can.

You shouldn’t stop being careful just because you know the person you’re with – you may not know them as well as you think.



Kylie’s Story

I was lucky because my friends were there for me and looked after me. It wasn’t like I didn’t know him. He’d been at the pub before, we had talked a bit. He seemed an OK guy. He kept buying me drinks and I guess I was in a mood for partying, so I kept drinking them. Way too many, way too fast. He kept trying to get me to go outside. I didn’t want to but we ended up in the car park.

Tanya and Jo had been keeping an eye on me. They were worried I’d had too much to drink. They noticed I wasn’t inside and came looking for me.

They just told him I was drunk and they were taking me home. They got my bag and me into a taxi and took me home.

Good friends can make a big difference.

I was frightened. I felt sick. I didn’t want to be there. I didn’t know how to get away.

Parents can help

Talking about values and what is considered responsible, acceptable behaviour is an important part of building young people's understanding about relationships.

Most young people think relationships – going together – should be fun. As they grow into early adulthood they start to look to relationships to provide support, affection, closeness.

Early on, their peer group can play a very influential role in determining what is “fun”. But parents too play an important role. Family behaviour and expectations provide an important model for young people experiencing their first relationships. These early experiences often set the pattern for future relationships so don't be frightened to talk to your children about relationships.

We all need to understand and encourage the importance of those fundamental values that are the foundation of healthy, strong relationships:

Respect
Communication
Sharing
Independence
Trust
Companionship
Honesty

The experiences of your own family and friends can be a useful starting point. Even television programmes can provide examples of different types of relationships and how people treat each other. What do your kids think about how the characters react? Would they react the same way? Be sure to give them plenty of room to tell you how they're feeling about things.

Try to encourage them to stay connected with their friends and engaged in activities outside what might be their first intense relationship. These networks will be an important source of support if there are problems.

Young people can be unaware of some of the negative consequences that might result from thoughtless sexual behaviour. Even when someone is legally old enough and gives consent, indiscriminate sexual activity can have serious consequences – the possibility of sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, loss of reputation, being talked about, embarrassment and anxiety.

Good relationships don't work without affection and respect.



Jon's Story

I have a pretty good relationship with my son Nick. Angie, his mum, and I - we're proud of him. He does well in school and sport and he is a popular kid with everybody. So it was a big shock to hear him talking on his mobile phone to his mates about some of the girls at school – everyone was getting labelled either a “slut” or “frigid”.

I don't want Nick growing up to think that sex is just some kind of recreational activity he can boast about to his mates. I think he is too young for a steady relationship, but he should treat girls with respect. Nick needed to understand that his mum and I have expectations about his behaviour. We let him know that we thought he was out of line. I asked him to think about how he would feel if someone spoke about his sister like that – or tried to pressure or humiliate her into having sex. I explained that when a guy pressures a girl, verbally or physically, he spoils whatever trust, closeness or

respect there may have been. He needed to understand that he could get a reputation, maybe it will mean that in the future girls he really likes won't go out with him.

Angie's trying to make sure that she and Nick talk more. Help him understand how the girls might feel. Give him confidence to be himself, not have to play the “big man”.

I started to wonder about some of the boys I coach for the school team. Was anyone talking to them about relationships and respect? I've started talking to some of the other coaches about making sure our boys understand what's acceptable behaviour and the sort of trouble they can get into if they don't approach sex and relationships sensibly. I know boys aren't the greatest listeners but at least we should try.

What parents can do

Parents, other family members and friends may notice significant changes in behaviour when someone is the victim of abuse.

What to look for:

- Is she losing interest in activities she used to enjoy?
- Is she overly worried about what her boyfriend thinks?
- Is she mainly happy when she is with him or is she worried and anxious?
- Is she concerned that he may get angry about something either you or she may say or do?
- Is she making excuses for him all the time?
- Is she avoiding friends and social activities that don't involve him?
- Does she joke about his violent outbursts?
- Has she had unexplained injuries or do the explanations she gives seem odd or implausible?
- Has her behaviour changed dramatically since she started seeing him?

What to do:

Encourage her to talk to you

You could use this booklet as a starting point for a chat. Try to do this when you're alone, not in front of her friends or other family members. Sometimes it can be easier if there is another focus of activity such as going for a drive together, making a meal or doing the dishes. Try to get her to do most of the talking. Ask open-ended questions like "How do you feel? What do your friends think about your relationship? What do you want to

do in the future - now and long-term?"

Listen to her - don't be judgemental

If she is in an abusive relationship she probably already feels very down about herself. Don't make her feel worse. Don't blame her for what is happening. Don't tell her what she should have done differently - concentrate on what makes her happy and how she can change things now.

Don't tell her what to do - encourage her to think about her options

She has to find her own way through the situation, but talking to you or a trusted person can help her resolve what she needs to do. Your aim is to help her become an independent, assertive person. That is the best protection you can give her and the best way of ensuring she does not become a victim of abuse again.

Make clear that she has your support

She may be feeling very isolated and alone. Let her know that you care about her and are concerned about her safety. You want her to be happy and will support her in any way that will help. Be specific about why you are concerned - "We feel bad when he says you're stupid. We hate to see you nervous and unhappy. What do you think when he does that?"

Help her work out some realistic strategies

What works here depends on how willing she is to see there is a problem and how abusive the relationship has become. The 24-hour helpline - 1800 200 526 - is there to help you, as well as her, figure out a good approach. Please use it.

How to get help

Finding the right time and courage for you to talk about these issues is important.

Relationships are a key part of our lives.

The relationship experiences of young people can affect their whole lives because how people treat us affects how we feel about ourselves – not only now but into the future.

If you need advice or information there is a range of services and support available.

Don't be frightened to ask for help, especially if you or someone you know is in a violent relationship or has been sexually assaulted.

Relationships may not be easy but they should never hurt.

