

## Common Myths about domestic violence

Agree? Disagree? Not sure?

- She must have done something to deserve it or provoke it.
- It can't be that bad or she'd leave.
- It's just the odd lovers' tiff. Everybody has arguments.
- It's all caused by alcohol.
- Abusers must be mentally ill.
- They must have come from a violent family.
- She should stay for the sake of the children.
- Domestic violence only happens in working class families.
- Abusers just can't control themselves.
- If there are no bruises, it can't be domestic violence.
- Domestic violence has no impact on children.
- What goes on behind closed doors should stay behind closed doors.
- Domestic violence is a new problem.
- If it only happens once, it isn't domestic violence.

## Common Myths about domestic violence

Agree? Disagree? Not sure?

The reality....

**She must have done something to deserve it or provoke it.**

No one deserves to be beaten or mentally tortured. Often domestic violence is triggered off by simple requests such as money for food. Violent behaviour is a choice with consequences.

**It can't be that bad or she'd leave.**

Women stay in violent relationships for a number of reasons ranging from love to terror. There are both emotional and practical reasons for staying. It is important to remember, **leaving is a process and not an event.**

**It's just the odd lovers' tiff. Everybody has arguments.**

Yes it is true that everyone has arguments. Disagreement and challenge are elements of all relationships. However, when fear is present, then this brings a different dynamic. Women who suffer domestic violence are often seriously injured and many are hospitalised. Domestic violence is a serious problem which can result in murder.

**It's all caused by drink.**

Alcohol is often used as an excuse for domestic violence. While drinking can exacerbate the situation, it is not the sole cause. The origins of domestic violence are power and control. Many abusers abuse their partners when they are not drinking.

**Abusers must be mentally ill.**

Stress and mental illness are often presented as reasons for domestic violence. Domestic violence happens because the abuser has made a choice to be abusive. Domestic violence is rarely caused by mental illness. Most abusers only abuse their partners and can function normally in all other areas of their lives.

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The reality....

**They must have come from a violent family.**

There is no quality research to support the cycle of violence theory and there is no definite inevitable link. Some children grow up to make healthy choices and can go on to have positive relationships free from abuse. It is important to remember behaviour is always a choice.

**She should stay for the sake of the children.**

Children also suffer from domestic violence. Women who experience violence often make decisions which they feel are in the best interests of the children, whether this is staying or leaving. Often for children, emotional and physical well being can improve when the violence is removed and effective support is put in place.

**Domestic violence only happens in working class families.**

Domestic violence cuts across all boundaries of age, class, religion, culture, sexuality, race etc. Anyone can experience domestic violence.

**Abusers just can't control themselves.**

Violent behaviour is always a choice. Those who choose to be violent are often very much in control and use this as a tactic, knowing what the consequences will be.

**If there are no bruises, it can't be domestic violence.**

Domestic violence includes emotional and verbal abuse as well as physical. Emotional abuse can be very powerful and the impact can be devastating in both the short and long term.

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The reality....

### Domestic violence has no impact on children.

Domestic violence does impact on children. All children will experience it differently and all will respond differently. Some children witness or overhear the violence whereas others can be victims of physical violence. Research has shown, if proper support is put in place, many children can and do recover from the negative impact of domestic violence. It is important to remember all children are different.

### What goes on behind closed doors should stay behind closed doors.

Domestic violence is everyone's business. We all have a part to play in challenging the existence of domestic violence and supporting those who experience it. If someone is experiencing abuse within the home, they have a right to reach out and to access the support they need.

### Domestic violence is a new problem.

Sadly domestic violence has always been there. In the past however, unwritten rules and the strong belief in family values, marriage and privacy did keep it behind closed doors. Due to the progress made in raising the issue publicly and at a government level, we have witnessed an increase in service provision and changes in law which have encouraged more victims to come forward to access the support they need.

### If it only happens once, it isn't domestic violence.

Abuse is abuse. It doesn't matter how often it happens, **there is no excuse for abuse**. Statistics show it is unlikely that physical violence will be an isolated incident. If it happens once, chances are, it will happen again. Domestic violence includes emotional and verbal abuse as well as physical. Emotional abuse can be very powerful and the impact can be devastating in both the short and long term.