



Tip Sheet 6

Responding to Domestic and Family Violence – Are you a victim?

“It’s confusing. You second guess yourself.

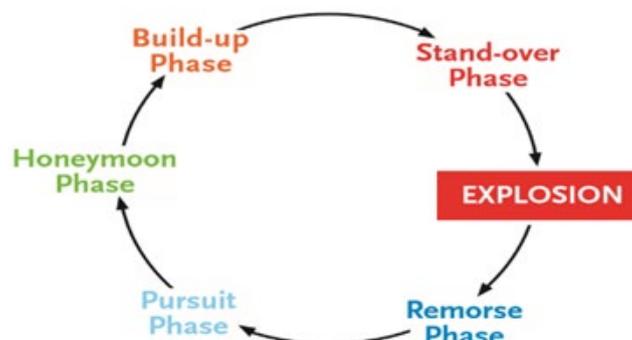
You say – maybe it will get better, maybe he is right and I am ‘messed up’. Perhaps if I just do what he says it will all be OK? He did promise it wouldn’t happen again .. and work has been so stressfull... I just don’t know what to do? I’m scared.”

Have you had any of these thoughts? Do you wonder what is true anymore? Are you confused about the way ahead? It may be difficult to admit that you (and/or your family) are facing domestic and family violence. It’s overwhelming. But there is a way ahead. There is help. Recognising and admitting what is going on is the first step to accessing appropriate assistance.

Domestic and Family Violence is any behaviour (either physical or non- physical) in an intimate or family relationship, that is intended to improperly coerce or control another person, or that causes another person to be intimidated or live in fear. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, verbal, financial or stalking behaviour. If you are concerned that you may be a victim of domestic and family violence, please read Tip Sheet 1 and 2 of this series, and then refer back to this tip sheet which gives further information on recognising domestic and family violence.

► The Cycle of Violence¹

The cycle of violence theory explains how and why the behaviour of a person who commits domestic and family violence may change so dramatically over time. In an unhealthy relationship, such as an abusive relationship, times of tension lead to violence. After the violence, there are attempts to restore the relationship, often called the honeymoon stage.



¹ Cycle of Violence – source Dr Lenore Walker, 1979, USA
Charmed and Dangerous: A Woman’s guide to Reclaiming a Healthy Relationship.



The cycle goes through several stages. However, it is not the same for everyone – some abusers skip stages or repeat stages quickly. The Bible may also be misquoted throughout any of the following stages to justify actions and abusive behaviour. (For more information about what the Bible says on Domestic and Family Violence, see Tip Sheet 1).

The build-up phase

This phase involves escalating tension marked by increased verbal, physical, sexual, spiritual, emotional or financial abuse. The behaviour is often volatile and difficult to predict.

The stand over phase

This phase can be extremely frightening. This phase is often described as “walking on egg shells”. The abuser’s behaviour escalates to the point where release of tension is inevitable.

Explosion

The explosion stage marks the peak of violence in the relationship. It is the height of manipulation and control. The person who commits domestic and family violence experiences a release of tension during an explosion phase, which can be addictive.

The remorse phase

This phase is often labelled the “ashamed” stage. The abuser often feels remorse. They retreat and become withdrawn from the relationship, but will continue to try and blame their victims, and justify their actions.

The pursuit phase

At this stage, the abuser often makes promises never to repeat their violent behaviour. They may try to make up for their past behaviour during this period and say that other factors have caused them to be violent (e.g. work stress, drugs, or alcohol). The personality of the abuser often changes in this phase, and they become charming and attentive, and may start to buy gifts for the victim/s.

The honeymoon phase

The tension is gone in this phase, and both parties may enter denial about the presence of violence in the relationship. All parties do not want the relationship to end, so are happy to ignore the possibility that the violence could occur again. After some time, this stage will wane, and the cycle may repeat.

For further information on the cycle of abuse, understanding Domestic and Family violence and the effects it can have on children, legal rights, deciding to leave, safety planning and parenting after a domestically violent relationship please download the “Charmed and Dangerous” booklet through this link: http://www.northshoredomesticviolence.org.au/uploads/1/2/3/4/1234973/charmed_web.pdf.

“Charmed and Dangerous” is a secular resource but has much helpful information around domestic and family violence. Please access it remembering that some of the information (i.e. on same sex relationships) is not compatible with a Biblical worldview.



▶ **Don't believe the myths.**

Some people believe that it is better to stay in an abusive relationship than to “break up” a family. But your children will not be better off if you stay in an unsafe and abusive relationship (see Tip Sheet 9.) Nor does God want you to stay in a relationship that is unsafe (see Tip Sheet 1 for more on what the Bible says about Family and Domestic Violence). Where the church ideally seeks restoration of relationships – in domestically violent situations restoration is often not possible or safe.

No victim of domestic and family violence should be pressured to reconcile with or restore a relationship with perpetrator. Although the Church values marriage extremely highly, you and your children’s emotional and physical safety is always paramount. Any consideration of reconciliation needs to be done with your and your children’s safety as the highest priority.

If you are concerned that you are a victim of domestic and family violence please contact the CPU (Conduct Protocol Unit) and inform the Breaking the Silence representative or leadership of your church.

▶ **Please ask for professional help**

Ultimately perpetrators do not use abuse because of what their partners do or do not do; they abuse because of their own choices and pathology. In other words....it is not your fault.²

Being a victim of domestic and family violence is overwhelming and you will likely need support and counselling. When and how you seek this care is your choice. Your local General Practitioner can provide information and assistance. In addition, the Presbyterian Church of NSW has counselling services ready to support you. For assistance and Christian Counselling please contact;

Jericho Road

Justine Jenner Phone: **1800 818 133**, Email: jjenner@jerichoroad.org.au
<https://jerichoroad.org.au/counselling>

▶ **Further contacts:**

Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU), Presbyterian Church of NSW

Jon Flood Phone: **02 9690 9325**, Email: jflood@pcnsw.org.au, www.breakingthesilence.org.au

NSW Domestic Violence Line - 1800 656 463

24/7 support and referrals for victims. www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help

Child protection Helpline - 132 111

▶ **Further resources:**

J. S. Holcomb, Lindsey. A. Holcomb. Is it my fault? Hope and healing for those suffering domestic violence. Chicago. Moody Publishers. 2014.

Tweed Shire Women’s Services Inc. Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program (WDVCAP) at Legal Aid NSW. Charmed and Dangerous: A woman’s guide to reclaiming a healthy relationship. June 2017, Online:
<http://lacextra.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/PublicationsResourcesService/PublicationImprints/Files/754.pdf>

²J. S. Holcomb, Lindsey. A. Holcomb. Is it my fault? Hope and healing for those suffering domestic violence.Chicago.Moody Publishers. 2014.