



## Tip Sheet 4

# Responding to Domestic and Family Violence from a Pastoral Perspective

Safety is the most important factor for someone facing domestic and family violence. Most people think this pertains to physical safety, and this is true and should always be the first priority. However, emotional safety is also important.

### ► What is emotional safety?

A victim of abuse is systematically conditioned (by perpetrators) to believe that no one will care or believe their story. And so, from a victim's perspective, disclosing violence is a vulnerable and risky decision. In fact, for many victims staying in an abusive relationship is often easier than disclosing. Victims fear the wrath of perpetrators. If the perpetrator finds out about the disclosure, then abuse is likely to escalate and further endanger victims. Therefore, a victim needs to feel that the person they are speaking to will provide emotional support and that they are trustworthy/safe.

*“Emotional safety means feeling accepted; it is the sense that one is safe from emotional attack or harm. Most survivors have probably felt emotionally unsafe or had their sense of “being all right” taken away.”*

If a victim feels supported by the people around them they are more likely to seek help.

### ► What to do

- If a victim discloses abuse- Listen, listen, listen, and do not add anything.
- Say little, except for active listening skills (things like – “mmm”, ‘yes’, ‘I see’, ‘that sounds so difficult’ etc.) until the person finishes telling their story. Respond with concern and sympathy.
- A victim is likely to ask you to ensure the confidentiality of their story before talking about their abuse. You can't promise absolute confidentiality. Assure them that you are concerned and want to hear what they have to say, but that if they or their children are at risk of harm, you have a duty of care and are mandated to report to relevant authorities, but will ensure their privacy as much as possible.
- Ensure their safety-ask what can be done to make them feel safe and follow through.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Provide details of the process and who you will talk to.
- Do not compromise the situation by making comments, giving advice or adding to the victims' allegations.
- Make notes of what was said and report – to the Police if it is urgent, and to the CPU immediately.
- Refer them to support, both within the church – if it is appropriate – and also to outside specialist Domestic Violence services.



▶ **And remember to look after yourself...**

As a leader it can be very distressing to have someone disclose abuse. Start by debriefing. That is, find some way to verbally and emotionally unload. Tell a trusted person how you feel. Do not use names or identifying details, simply express how you feel about it. Please contact Jericho Road (<https://jerichoroad.org.au/>) if you feel you need further support, there are counselling services that can be of assistance and the Presbyterian Church wants to support you.

▶ **For further information:**

**Jericho Road**

Justine Jenner

Phone: **1800 818 133**

Email: [jjenner@jerichoroad.org.au](mailto:jjenner@jerichoroad.org.au)

<https://jerichoroad.org.au/counselling>

**Breaking the Silence Training Workbook**

pg. 11,12 <https://jerichoroad.org.au/breaking-the-silence/basic-training>

**Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU), Presbyterian Church of NSW**

Jon Flood

Phone: **02 9690 9325**

Email: [jflood@pcnsw.org.au](mailto:jflood@pcnsw.org.au)

[www.breakingthesilence.org.au](http://www.breakingthesilence.org.au)

**NSW Domestic Violence Line**

Phone: **1800 656 463**

24/7 support and referrals for victims.

[www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help](http://www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help)

**No to Violence: Men's referral service**

Phone: **1300 766 491**

Information, referral and support for male perpetrators, male victims and for their relative and friends. [www.ntv.org.au](http://www.ntv.org.au)

**Child protection Helpline**

Phone: **132 111**

**Further resources:** National Centre on Domestic Violence Trauma and mental health. Chicago. Creating Trauma informed series: tipsheet series -Tips for enhancing emotional safety. August 2011. Online Tips for Enhancing Emotional Safety [http://nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Tipsheet\\_Emotional-Safety\\_NCDVTMH\\_Aug2011.pdf](http://nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Tipsheet_Emotional-Safety_NCDVTMH_Aug2011.pdf)