



Personal Tool

*Support for victims of Domestic and Family Violence
– we all have a part to play*

Many of us are working from home or spending more time together at home. We're experiencing increased stress and anxiety. Stresses such as financial pressure, school holidays, supervising children's schoolwork have all contributed to increasing the demands on people and their families. In some cases, these stresses will fall away again just as fast. In other cases, tensions will escalate to violence. For many households, the home will no longer be safe. It's important to pause and think that in non-COVID times, acknowledging that some households were unsafe, is painful. When we add in the really big impacts of the global pandemic, working from home and an economic recession, it's even harder to process. But we do need to process it. Domestic violence, otherwise known as violence in the home or intimate partner violence, does not discriminate because of age, socioeconomic status, education, or race. Violence in the home is not something that a person whom you care about will sit down and say clearly to you. This is because of the feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment that goes with it. If you are concerned about yourself or someone you love – please take the time to learn the signs and develop some approaches to get the person talking. In families, friendships and workplaces alike do not promise something that you cannot deliver and only promise what you know you can keep.

At present, one woman every week is killed at the hand of her partner. Domestic violence is not just the responsibility of health care workers, governments, or law enforcement – it is yours, mine, and everyone's really. If we can all chip away at this issue we may just make it a problem of the past.

If you are reading this and concerned about yourself and your current situation – please believe that there is support out there to help you. All mental health professionals are trained not to judge and to work with you wherever you are at. As a friend, colleague, manager or a family member if you are concerned about someone - please read on for strategies and support them where you can. The best tips are:

- **Believe the person.** Just because the perpetrator is "lovely" or "calm" when you see them, please remember that you are not there when the doors are closed.
- **Ensure your words are encouraging,** supporting and kind. This will really help.
- **Check when is a good time** or a bad time to reach out and connect. Do not assume that a victim of Domestic and Family Violence is avoiding you or does not want to hear from you – during this time connection is important to help with the feelings of isolation.
- **Do not doubt your gut instinct.** Send a text when it is appropriate (i.e. not the middle of the night) and be unafraid that the perpetrator may see it. The perpetrator's primary goal is to isolate the person, and you being clear in your texts that you care, will have an impact.



- **Be aware** that the perpetrator can monitor all forms of communications. Always ask the person if this is a good time to talk.
- **Listen without judgement** and do not make suggestions – respect the choices and decisions that a person makes as they know what is right and safe for them.
- **Look out** for lots of text messages when they are working or socialising with you (online or otherwise). Ask them (in an informal way) who it is that is texting them and what is that is so important that it cannot wait. Ask them if everything is ok.
- For those who are getting a great deal of harassing text messages, suggest **downloading this app**: <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/women/arc-app>. It stores the text messages and emails off the phone and looks like a period tracker.
- **Do not assume** that home is a safe place.
- **Avoid avoiding them.** If someone that you care about has given you a hint, please reach out and ask more open questions. Something like "You seem really stressed. Is everything ok?"
- **Ask** what you can do to help or what might be helpful, e.g. shopping, talking about something else, looking after pets, playing a game with their children online, doing online exercise class together.
- It is important to **remind yourself** that your role is not to counsel them; you can listen and offer support.
- **Domestic Violence Services** are essential services and are open for support. 1800 RESPECT(737 732), FACS (Family and Community Services), www.insightexchange.net

If there is an immediate risk, contact emergency services on 000. To assist colleagues encourage them to get support through the EAP. Telephone and video counselling are available 24/7. In some cases, as a colleague or friend, it is helpful if you arrange the support or initiate the call. Remember to ask them if this is something they would like and suggest going for a walk or sit in a car to access their counselling session in private. Finally, respect their decisions to do what is right for them even if you do not agree.

For a confidential conversation with one of our experienced clinical professionals, please contact **AccessEAP** on **1800 818 728**.

