

Read this if you're a man who's:

- concerned about safety or depressed because your female partner is mistreating you, and
- wondering if your partner's actions are abuse.

In this fact sheet, **partner** means the female person you are or were married to, live or lived with in a marriage-like relationship, or have a child with.

See *Who Can Help?* for resources for the LGBTQ/2S community.

## You're not alone



If you're a man being abused by your partner, you're not alone. This type of abuse happens but isn't widely discussed or reported. It takes courage for you to recognize and report it.

## What's abuse?

Abuse includes behaviour ranging from threats to physical or sexual assault. It may also include harmful emotional, verbal, and financial actions.

The abuser uses threats and violence to get power and control over their partner. Often, the abuser blames the abuse on the victim. But abuse is the abuser's fault. *Abuse against you isn't your fault.*

Here are some examples of relationship abuse.

**Emotional or verbal abuse** includes when your partner:

- embarrasses you, yells at you, insults you, or calls you insulting names;
- constantly criticizes and blames you for everything;
- doesn't let you contact friends and family;
- threatens to have you deported; or
- accuses you of having or wanting to have sex with someone else.

**Psychological abuse** includes when your partner:

- decides or limits what you can do, where you go, or who you see;
- opens and reads your mail, text messages, email, or other private mail;
- follows or watches you wherever you are;

- phones, texts, or emails you a lot, especially when you've asked not to be contacted;
- checks your phone or internet activity; or
- threatens to hurt you, your children, friends, or a pet.

**Financial abuse** includes when your partner:

- makes all the household money decisions and doesn't let you have any money;
- doesn't let you use bank accounts or credit cards;
- won't let you get a job or makes you lose your job; or
- runs up debts in your name.

**Sexual abuse** includes when your partner:

- forces you to perform sex acts that make you uncomfortable or hurt you; or
- injures sexual parts of your body without your agreement.

**Physical abuse** includes when your partner:

- stops you from leaving your home;
- breaks your things, damages property, or threatens to damage something that you value; or
- shoves, slaps, bites, chokes, punches, or kicks you, or threatens or hurts you with a weapon or any object.

It's also abuse if your partner threatens to kidnap your children, or threatens to use the courts to take your children away from you.

Abuse can continue after you leave your partner. For example, your abuser may threaten to take you to court to pressure you to do what they want. Or they may keep taking or trying to take you to court, or not pay child support that the court ordered.

## Who's most at risk?

Studies show that men who are at more risk of experiencing abuse include men who are younger, Aboriginal, in common-law relationships, or with partners who have high levels of conflict and stress in other areas of life. Help is available for all men.

## When is abuse against the law?



Any kind of abuse is harmful. But many kinds of abuse are also crimes:

- **Physical assault** is when your partner hits or hurts you. It's also when your partner threatens to hit or hurt you, and you believe that can and will happen.
- **Sexual assault** is when anything sexual happens to you that you don't agree to. This includes unwanted kissing, sexual touching, and forced intercourse.
- **Criminal harassment** (sometimes called **stalking**) includes when your partner forces unwanted and constant attention on you. It's a pattern of threats and actions that makes you afraid for yourself and your children. The law says that your partner can't phone or email you again and again, follow you, threaten you, or threaten to destroy your property.

## Why do you stay?

Men stay with abusive partners for many reasons. One reason may be society's attitudes about how men and women should act. Our society expects men to be strong and protect women, not be abused by them.

Repeated psychological and emotional abuse over time lowers confidence and self-esteem. You may begin to believe that you haven't fulfilled society's idea of a man's role and that you deserve the abuse. Such beliefs make it difficult for a man to leave an abusive relationship.

Other reasons why you stay may include:

- You want the relationship to continue because you love your partner and sometimes your partner acts loving and kind.
- You feel financially dependent on your partner, especially if you have a disability.
- You're afraid for your children's safety.
- You want to spend time with and care for your children.
- You think no one will believe the abuse happened.

- You're in denial that you're in an abusive relationship. (You believe, "it's not that bad" or "I'm a man. I can deal with it.")
- You have no social supports and feel alone.
- You don't know about your legal rights or support services that can help you.
- You feel pressured by family or community, or by religious, cultural, or societal beliefs.

## You can get help



Because you're in an abusive relationship, you might feel embarrassed, ashamed, depressed, frustrated, guilty, trapped, or afraid and may not want to tell anyone or ask for help. Abuse in relationships *isn't* a private family matter. You can get help, whether you want to stay in the relationship or leave.

Start by telling someone you trust and who you think will believe you about the abuse. Make a safety plan that sets out steps you can take to protect yourself when abuse happens. See *Safety Planning*.

## Where can men find help?



VictimLinkBC gives confidential, multilingual support to people experiencing abuse. They offer referral services and information about support resources.

**1-800-563-0808** (24 hours a day)

Some organizations give support services, counselling, and information specifically for men:

BC Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse  
**604-682-6482** (Greater Vancouver)  
**1-888-682-6482** (elsewhere in BC)  
**bc-malesurvivors.com**

BC Men's Resource Centre  
**604-878-9033** (Greater Vancouver)

The Men's Centre  
**250-716-1551** (Nanaimo)  
**877-716-1551** (elsewhere in BC)  
**themenscentre.ca**

Men's Trauma Centre  
**250-381-6367** (Victoria)  
**1-866-793-6367** (elsewhere in BC)  
**menstrauma.com**