



Help for Men Who Are Being Abused

Recognizing the Signs and Getting Out Safely



While the majority of domestic violence victims are women, abuse of men happens far more often than you'd probably expect. Typically, men are physically stronger than women but that doesn't necessarily make it easier to escape the violence or the relationship. An abused man faces a shortage of resources, skepticism from police, and major legal obstacles, especially when it comes to gaining custody of his children from an abusive mother. No matter your age, occupation, or sexual orientation, though, you can overcome these challenges and escape the abuse.

Understanding domestic violence against men

If you're a man in an abusive relationship, it's important to know that you're not alone. It happens to men from all cultures and all walks of life. Figures suggest that as many as one in three victims of domestic violence are male. However, men are often reluctant to report abuse by women because they feel embarrassed, or they fear they won't be believed, or worse, that police will assume that since they're male they are the perpetrator of the violence and not the victim.

An abusive wife or partner may hit, kick, bite, punch, spit, throw things, or destroy your possessions. To make up for any difference in strength, she may attack you while you're asleep or otherwise catch you by surprise. She may also use a weapon, such as a gun or knife, or strike you with an object, abuse or threaten your children, or harm your pets. Of course, domestic abuse is not limited to violence. Your spouse or partner may also:

- ▶ Verbally abuse you, belittle you, or humiliate you in front of friends, colleagues, or family, or on social media sites.
- ▶ Be possessive, act jealous, or harass you with accusations of being unfaithful.
- ▶ Take away your car keys or medications, try to control where you go and who you see.
- ▶ Try to control how you spend money or deliberately default on joint financial obligations.
- ▶ Make false allegations about you to your friends, employer, or the police, or find other ways to manipulate and isolate you.
- ▶ Threaten to leave you and prevent you from seeing your kids if you report the abuse.

If you're gay, bisexual, or transgender

You can experience domestic violence if you're in a relationship with someone who:

- Threatens to tell friends, family, colleagues, or community members your sexual orientation or gender identity
- Tells you that authorities won't help a gay, bisexual, or transgender person
- Tells you that leaving the relationship means you're admitting that gay, bisexual, or transgender relationships are deviant
- Justifies abuse by telling you that you're not "really" gay, bisexual, or transgender
- Says that men are naturally violent

Source: *Mayo Clinic*

Why men don't leave

Many people have trouble understanding why a woman who is being abused by her husband or boyfriend doesn't simply just leave him. When the roles are reversed, and the man is the victim of the abuse, people are even more bemused. However, anyone who's been in an abusive relationship knows that it's never that simple. Ending a relationship, even an abusive one, is rarely easy.

You may feel that you have to stay in the relationship because:

You want to protect your children. You worry that if you leave your spouse will harm your children or prevent you from having access to them. Obtaining custody of children is always challenging for fathers, but even if you are confident that you can do so, you may still feel overwhelmed at the prospect of raising them alone.

You feel ashamed. Many men feel great shame that they've been beaten down by a woman or failed in their role as protector and provider for the family.

Your religious beliefs dictate that you stay or your self-worth is so low that you feel this relationship is all you deserve.

There's a lack of resources. Many men have difficulty being believed by the authorities, or their abuse is minimized because they're male, and can find few resources to help abused men.

You're in a same sex relationship but haven't come out to family or friends, and are afraid your partner will out you.

You're in denial. Just as with female domestic violence victims, denying that there is a problem in your relationship will only prolong the abuse. You may believe that you can help your abuser or she may have promised to change. But change can only happen once your abuser takes full responsibility for her behavior and seeks professional treatment.

Finding support

For tips on safely leaving an abusive relationship

See [Getting Out of An Abusive Relationship](/articles/abuse/getting-out-of-an-abusive-relationship.htm). (/articles/abuse/getting-out-of-an-abusive-relationship.htm) While it's written specifically for women, the emotional issues are similar so it can be helpful to men as well.

Domestic violence and abuse can have a serious physical and psychological impact on both you and your children. The first step to stopping the abuse is to reach out. Talk to a friend, family member, or someone else you trust, or call a domestic violence helpline.

Admitting the problem and seeking help doesn't mean you have failed as a man or as a husband. You are not to blame, and you are not weak. As well as offering a sense of relief and providing some much-needed support, sharing details of your abuse can also be the first step in building a case against your abuser and protecting your kids.

When dealing with your abusive partner:

Leave if possible. Be aware of any signs that may trigger a violent response from your spouse or partner and be ready to leave quickly. If you need to stay to protect your children, call the emergency services. The police have an obligation to protect you and your children, just as they do a female victim.

Never retaliate. An abusive woman or partner will often try to provoke you into retaliating or using force to escape the situation. If you do retaliate, you'll almost certainly be the one who is arrested and/or removed from your home.

Get evidence of the abuse. Report all incidents to the police and get a copy of each police report. Keep a journal of all abuse with a clear record of dates, times, and any witnesses. Include a photographic record of your injuries and make sure your doctor or hospital also documents your injuries. Remember, medical personnel are unlikely to ask if a man has been a victim of domestic violence, so it's up to you to ensure that the cause of your injuries are documented.

Keep a mobile phone, evidence of the abuse, and other important documents close at hand. If you and your children have to leave instantly in order to escape the abuse, you'll need to take with you evidence of the abuse and important documents, such as passport and driver's license. It may be safer to keep these items outside of the home.

Obtain advice from a domestic violence program or legal aid resource about getting a restraining order or order of protection against your spouse and, if necessary, seeking temporary custody of your children.

Moving on from an abusive relationship

Support from family and friends as well as counseling, [therapy](/articles/mental-health/finding-a-therapist-who-can-help-you-heal.htm) (/articles/mental-health/finding-a-therapist-who-can-help-you-heal.htm), and support groups for domestic abuse survivors can help you move on from an abusive relationship. You or your children may struggle with upsetting emotions or feel numb, disconnected, and unable to trust other

people. After [the trauma of an abusive relationship \(/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm\)](/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm), it can take a while to get over the pain and bad memories but you can heal and move on.

Even if you're eager to jump into a new relationship and finally get the intimacy and support you've been missing, it's wise take things slowly. Make sure you're aware of any red flag behaviors in a potential new partner and what it takes to [build healthy, new relationships \(/articles/relationships-communication/tips-for-finding-lasting-love.htm\)](/articles/relationships-communication/tips-for-finding-lasting-love.htm).

Where to turn for help

Abused men can reach out to the following organizations for help:

- U.S. and Canada: 1-800-799-7233 [The National Domestic Violence Hotline \(http://www.thehotline.org/\)](http://www.thehotline.org/)
- UK: 01823 334244 – [ManKind Initiative \(http://www.mankind.org.uk\)](http://www.mankind.org.uk)
- Ireland: 046 902 3710 - [AMEN \(http://www.amen.ie\)](http://www.amen.ie)
- Australia: [One in Three Campaign \(http://www.oneinthree.com.au/servicesandresources/\)](http://www.oneinthree.com.au/servicesandresources/) offers a number of crisis hotlines

More help for abuse

[Domestic Violence and Abuse: \(/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm\)](/articles/abuse/domestic-violence-and-abuse.htm) Are You or Someone You Care About in an Abusive Relationship?

[Emotional and Psychological Trauma: \(/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma.htm\)](/articles/ptsd-trauma/coping-with-emotional-and-psychological-trauma.htm) Healing from Trauma and Moving On

[Finding a Therapist Who Can Help You Heal: \(/articles/mental-health/finding-a-therapist-who-can-help-you-heal.htm\)](/articles/mental-health/finding-a-therapist-who-can-help-you-heal.htm) Getting the Most out of Therapy and Counseling

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