

It is vital that we believe and assist women and their children escaping domestic violence. Their safety and well-being is to be of utmost importance to all of us, as neighbours, friends, workers and as a community.

Lack of Financial Resources

Many women in violent relationships are denied access to financial resources, limiting their opportunities to leave. Generally, access to affordable, appropriate housing and adequate income is limited to women, especially when children are involved. Studies have shown that custodial parents (usually women) are financially worse off following separation

Professional Responses

Inappropriate responses by professional workers to women who seek out help also contribute to the reasons why women stay in violent relationships or return to them. Doctors, Clergymen or Counsellors can be contact points for women in violent relationships. When women are disbelieved, not listened to or their experience is belittled, they are often discouraged from seeking help or leaving the violent situation. Women may also be made to feel responsible for the violence or encouraged to endure it for the family's sake.

Many women have found it difficult to gain safety. Women who have experienced non-responsive or unhelpful emergency services and/or problems in accessing their legal rights may give up their struggle of freeing themselves from domestic violence

What help is available?

DVConnect: Ph. 1800 811 811
24 hours toll free telephone service including support to find crisis accommodation.

Women's Centre: Ph. 4775 7555
Crisis support, counselling and support groups.

Legal Aid: Ph. 1300 651 188
Free legal advice.

NQDVRS

- ◆ Information and referral
- ◆ AARDVARC program for children
- ◆ Resources
- ◆ Court Support
- ◆ Choosing Safety Upgrades program
- ◆ Men's Behaviour Change Program
- ◆ SAFE Dads Program
- ◆ Community education & Training

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Against Violence #8



Why do Women Stay?



"How am I going to cope with the kids? What will I do? Why can't he leave? I'm happy here" she said. "He'll find me wherever I go." (Anne)

Women's Coalition Against Violence:
'Blood On Whose Hands?'

NQDVRS
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Why Does She Stay?

It is often hard for anyone not in a domestic violence situation to understand why anybody would stay in a relationship where they are abused. The fact that many women choose to stay or return to a violent relationship leads many people to think that the women must be stupid, however, women face many restraints in leaving a violent partner.

Unfortunately, society does not often pose the questions: 'why doesn't he stop being violent?' and 'why doesn't he leave?'

Today it is still up to women to break free from violence, and there are many obstacles in their way.

Keeping the Family Together

Women are socialised to feel responsible for the happiness and well being of their relationship and family. Society expects women to be emotionally nurturing and caring, and to take on responsibility for the family as a unit. Breakdown of a family/relationship unit often means that women are seen to have failed. Women may not leave a violent relationship because they want to try to work harder to make it work, and/or because family, neighbours, professionals or others expect that they try harder.

Children

Many women have said that they stayed because of the children and because they

“Most of us establish “bottom lines” about relationships before we become involved. Bottom lines are the lower limits of our basic expectations of a relationship ...'if he ever hit me...'. ...These basic expectations remain until they are confronted. Then, for most of us it is easier to lower or alter them than it is to change our lives.”

O. Barnett & A. LaViolette

believed children need their father no matter what. Other women have stayed in/ or returned to violent relationships because he took, or threatened to take, the kids should she leave. Women may also stay or return in order not to upset the kids, not to take them away from familiar surroundings or deprive them of their belongings or friends. However, some women leave for good when they see their children being affected by the violence.

Low Self-Esteem

Domestic Violence produces more than physical scars. Physical Abuse in itself lowers the self-esteem of a person: being beaten around conveys the message that you are not worth much and not held in much respect. Moreover, physical abuse is almost always preceded by verbal abuse. Verbal abuse can be just as painful, and recovery can take much longer. Women in violent relationships frequently report low self-esteem and often find it hard to believe that they are able to leave and cope.

Fear of Reprisal

Many women are scared of what their already violent partner may do to them, their children or other family members should they leave. Violence often continues

after women have left. Many women have returned to a relationship because of intimidation, harassment and threats. Women's decision to leave a violent partner can aggravate him further, as he may see her decision to leave as a challenge to his power and control over her. Experience shows that women are particularly vulnerable to being killed by their partners after they leave or while they are in the process of leaving. Some women find it easier to live with a violent partner knowing where he is and what he is up to, than to live apart from him and always wonder what he will do to them



next.

Love

Generally, women do not want the relationship to end, just the violence. Women remain with or return to violent partners, because they care for them and their relationship. The times they experience with their partner may not always be bad. A violent man can be at other times a loving and charming partner. Women in violent relationships hope for better times and that he will change (as he