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You don't need to live in fear of domestic violence
If you are being threatened or physically or sexually assaulted by someone you live with, that is domestic violence. Domestic violence is controlling and aggressive behaviour and includes all kinds of physical, sexual and emotional abuse within all kinds of intimate relationships. Domestic violence is often used to maintain power and control over another person.

**domestic**

Anyone can experience domestic violence—it can happen in all kinds of relationships and for any reason. It is rarely a one-off event. Physical and sexual abuse tends to get worse over time and happen more often over time, sometimes only ending when one person actually kills the other.

This chain of events needs to be broken and a range of organisations are working to do this—some examples are mentioned in this leaflet. Individuals also have an important part to play. For people experiencing violence, the support of a trusted friend can be invaluable. Breaking the chain is a job for everyone, and we all have a vital role to play in supporting victims and helping law-enforcement agencies and other agencies to stamp out violent and controlling behaviour.

It is important to remember that domestic violence is a crime and those that commit such crimes must answer for their behaviour. We all have the right to live without fear of violence and abuse.
Domestic violence is much more common than most people realise. Even if you are not experiencing it yourself, you may well know someone who is. This leaflet may help you to help them.

violence

Who can I talk to? If you or someone you know are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence, there are a range of organisations that can help. Some useful addresses and telephone numbers are provided on this card, but there are many others: libraries, local authorities and Citizens Advice Bureaux are good sources of further information.

Remove this card and keep it with you for quick reference.
If you are in an abusive relationship, there are three important steps you can take:

- Recognise that it is happening to you.
- Accept that you are not to blame.
- Get help and support.

Recognising domestic violence

Domestic violence includes physical assault, sexual abuse, rape and threats. It may also include destructive criticism, pressure tactics, disrespect, breaking trust, isolation and harassment. Some abusers offer 'rewards' if certain conditions are met, or to try to persuade their partners that the abuse won't happen again. But, however persuasive they seem, the violence usually gets worse over time.

Domestic violence may happen to anyone, and in all kinds of relationships – heterosexual relationships, lesbian or gay relationships, or in relationships where a child is violent towards a parent. People suffer domestic violence regardless of their social group, class, age, race, disability, sexuality and lifestyle. The abuse can begin at any time – in new relationships or after many years spent together.
Accepting that you are not to blame.

It is not easy to accept that a loved one can behave so aggressively. Because you can’t explain your partner’s behaviour, you may assume that you are to blame. You are not. No one deserves to be assaulted, abused or humiliated, least of all by a partner in a supposedly caring relationship. It is your abuser’s behaviour which needs to change – there is no excuse.

Getting help

The most important thing you can do is tell someone. You may decide quickly and easily to ask for help. Or you may find the process is long and painful as you try to make the relationship work and stop the violence, and struggle against the practical and emotional reasons for staying in an abusive relationship. Most people try to find help a number of times before getting what they need, and even after leaving the relationship there may still be a risk. Never be afraid to ask for help again and remember, in an emergency, always call the police by dialing 999 (minimum 0800 112 999).

Remember that domestic violence is a crime and all agencies should work together to wipe out and prevent such crime, and to protect women, children and men who are suffering because of domestic violence. It is not simply the responsibility of a victim of domestic violence to end the abuse.
If you, or someone you know, are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence, there are a range of organisations that can help. We give some useful addresses and phone numbers here, but there are many others. Ask at your library, local authority or Citizens Advice Bureau for more information.

**Women's Aid National 24-hour Domestic Violence Helpline:** 08457 023 468

**Local Women's Aid refuge services:** Look in the phone book for your local number.

**Refuge 24-hour National Crisis Line:** 08705 995 443

**Victim Support:** 0845 3030 900

**Shelterline:** 0808 800 4444

**The police:** Look in the phone book for your local number. In an emergency always call 999.

**National Health Service** (for example, your GP): Look in the phone book for your local number.

**The Samaritans:** 08457 909090

**National Child Protection Helpline (NSPCC):** 0808 800 5000

**Caroline** Confidential telephone counselling for children, young people and adults: 020 8514 1177

**Broken Rainbow** A refect service for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people experiencing domestic violence: 07812 644 914
Women’s Aid National 24-hour
Dedicated Victims’ Helpline: 08457 003 443

Local Women’s Aid refuge services: Look in the phone book for your local number.

Refuge 24-hour National
Call Line: 0808 800 4444
Victim Support: 0845 30 30 900
Shelters: 0900 800 4444

National Health Service (for example, your GP): Look in the phone book for your local number.

The Samaritans: 08457 90 90 90
National Child Protection
Helpline: NSPCCs: 0800 800 5000
Gangline: 078 615 1177
Broken Rainbow: 0771 844 914