



# Global Wellness Monthly

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## Empowering change — personal relationships

### Understanding and escaping domestic violence

Domestic violence destroys confidence, relationships and even lives. It is also sadly much more common than many people think. If you are in an abusive relationship or if you suspect that someone you know is, you'll find lots of information and advice in this fact sheet.

### Understanding the cycle of violence

Domestic violence nearly always occurs in cycles which intensify over time, allowing physical and emotional abuse to last for months or years. It can be easy to enter an abusive relationship without realising. At the start, you can be showered with gifts and loving attention. However, an abuser will soon become possessive and controlling. They'll create a tense atmosphere that leads to arguments, intimidation and belittling of your emotions. These behaviours can turn into violent episodes, which may include sexual abuse and physical beating.

### Why do people stay in abusive relationships?

It can be difficult to break away from an abusive relationship. Many people feel they have no alternative but to stay — especially if they have no money or place to go. They may feel too ashamed of their situation to ask for help and often they are threatened with violence or emotional blackmail if they try to leave. Some people also find it hard to leave a partner they may still love or the parent of their children.

### What to do if you're being abused

The first thing you must remember is that any abuse is not your fault. It is your partner's choice to react with violence rather than walk away when they lose their temper. Find someone you trust and tell them what is happening. Friends and family members can find it difficult to hear that you are being abused. So it can be a good idea to ask them

## At a glance

- Abusive relationships are more common than many people think.
- By understanding how they work, you can learn to recognise the signs.
- With advice and support you can escape an abusive relationship or help someone else.

## Did you know?

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women takes place on the 25th November.



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to listen without judgement and to respect any decisions you make before you talk to them. There are also a number of organisations that provide advice and support for victims of domestic violence. You can find details of organisations in your area online. If you have confided in a friend or family member, they too may be able to help you explore your options.

### What to do if you think someone is being abused

- If someone is in an abusive relationship, you may notice some of the following characteristics:
- Feelings of depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance, extreme timidity and hopelessness.
- Lack of self-confidence, poor self-esteem.
- Physical signs of beatings such as black eyes, cuts, swollen face, welts, broken bones, etc.

If you think that a family member, friend or colleague may be the victim of domestic violence, we've got some advice to help you help them:

- Let them know you're there if they want to talk. They may be used to keeping it secret and it can be hard for them to admit that there's a problem. Try not to push them. Instead tell them that you're concerned and are there if they want to talk.
- Don't judge. Try to listen without judging and respect their decisions even if you find it hard.
- Explore their options. Discuss any options available to them. These will depend on the level of violence in their relationship and their financial and emotional state.
- Get support. It can be hard to hear about someone you love being hurt and you may feel angry, helpless or distressed. It's important that you get the support that you need as well. You too can contact a domestic violence organisation or speak with a counsellor.

If you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, it's important to recognise the signs and get the right support and advice. Remember that you're not alone. Lots of people manage to leave violent relationships behind and go on to enjoy happier lives.



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