



Domestic violence

Awareness

Without intervention domestic violence can become severe and result in injury. Whether you are staying in, planning on leaving, or have left an abusive relationship, you need to have a safety plan in place.

We maintain difficult friendships or those we have outgrown. We endure difficult managers or bosses. Why would leaving an abusive, intimate relationship be any easier?

Here are some of the reasons why we stay:

- **Fear of the unknown.** Fear of being stalked or killed by the abuser, of the abuser threatening to commit suicide, of not being believed about the abuse, or of placing the children at risk when visiting the abuser unsupervised. 75% of domestic violence homicides occur during or after the victim has left the abuser.
- **Isolation.** The abuser isolates the victim, which often leads to a lack of support systems for the victim. It is not uncommon for victims of abuse to have no family, friends, money, work, alternative childcare options, etc.
- **Financial dependence.** The victim may not be able to support themselves and the children without the abuser's income or have no marketable skills.
- **Learned behaviour.** Childhood experiences may have taught the victim that abuse is a normal part of relationships and that it's okay to abuse the people you love when they have done something 'wrong'.
- **Beliefs about the abuser.** Victims usually have strong feelings of love or an emotional connection to the abuser. They may think that abusers act out of love or that they are all-powerful and will be able to find them anywhere. Often victims believe that they are the only ones who can help the abuser overcome certain problems.
- **Beliefs about themselves.** Victims of abuse tend to internalise the blame that abusers repeatedly place on them and usually have

very low self-esteem. They may even think that abuse is all they deserve or that no one else will love them.

These complex emotions and situations make it very difficult to just leave. Should you find yourself in this situation, it is important to ask for help. If you are unable to leave immediately, are planning to leave, or fear for your safety even after you have left, it is very important that you prepare a safety plan in case of any emergencies.

