



Types of abuse

The Domestic Violence Act 1995 states in Part 1, Section 3 that violence can be physical, sexual, emotional or psychological. Domestic violence can also include financial or economic and/or spiritual abuse.

Physical abuse

An abuser may use physical force against you in such forms as: punching; bashing; choking; slapping; pinching; kicking; hitting with something; biting; burning with a cigarette; throwing things; strangling; pushing; pulling hair; spitting; urinating; tying up; holding down; locking in a cupboard; or using a knife, gun, belt, or any other kind of weapon.

Psychological/emotional abuse

Psychological/emotional abuse is the most common form of violence experienced by the women and children we see at Women's Refuge. Many of the women say it is the worst kind of abuse.

Psychological/emotional abuse is about manipulation and coercion, and affects your emotions and personality, rather than your body. Victims of emotional abuse can feel like they are going mad, are very frightened, and often feel like it's their fault.

This form of abuse is often underestimated. It's not recognised by many people because it can be subtle and hidden.

Psychological abuse includes: playing mind games; making threats; smashing personal belongings; hurting or threatening to hurt pets; doing anything that causes fear like driving fast; stalking; taking away your power of decision-making; limiting or stopping contact with friends and whānau/family; controlling or stopping your outings (alone or together); denying or minimising the abuse; making personal criticisms; being racist; name-calling; brandishing a weapon; getting excessively jealous; apologising after physical abuse; lying; swearing; keeping you up all night against your will; humiliating you in front of others; threatening to tell the authorities; keeping tabs on you; blaming you for the abuse; threatening suicide; enforcing their will and that their way should be followed; paranoid accusations of infidelity; threatening to use an animal like a dog to cause harm; letting the children see or hear violence; and telling you what to wear and how you should do your hair and make-up.

Sexual abuse

Sexual assault includes: rape; forcing sex; using sex as a bargaining tool so they won't physically abuse; sexual harassment; unwanted sexual touching; forcing someone to watch pornography; infidelity against your protestations; not using contraception when asked to; forcing someone to get pregnant; denying someone the use of contraception; forcing or denying an abortion; and making someone do sexual things that hurt or



cause shame.

Sexual violence to children is when an adult says sexual things, touches in a sexual way, or has any sexual contact with a child under 16.

Financial or economic abuse

Financial abuse can cause women and children to live in poverty. Women who are suffering financial abuse often can't rent a flat, get a loan, or get the power or phone connected, because previous bills were unpaid or because they have a bad credit record. They may have a criminal record and fines after taking the blame for the abuser, and they often have no access to money to enable them to leave a violent situation.

Financial or economic abuse can involve: stealing your money and belongings; controlling the money so you don't have a say in its spending or saving; giving you an 'allowance' that doesn't cover the bills while spending most of the money on themselves; checking all your receipts and the mileage on the car; keeping your bank cards and cheque book; refusing to pay child support or be named as the father; using your name for loans and credit cards so that you get the debt; forcing you to sign a prenuptial agreement; forcing you to work; forcing you to sell drugs or steal; making you go on the benefit illegally; not letting you go out to work or study; and not letting you have your name on the house and other shared property.

Spiritual violence

Abuse in any form robs women and children of their mauri-ora or wellbeing. Spiritual abuse is about attacks to your wairua or spirit, when abuse leaves you feeling soulless, empty of passion or joy, distant, and purposeless.

Spiritual violence includes: stopping you from expressing your spiritual or religious beliefs; not letting you go to church/ temple; putting you down or making fun of your whakapapa, beliefs, traditions, or culture; and doing anything that attacks your wairua/spirit, or stops you following your dreams or passions.

"I thought Women's Refuge was only for women who were beaten. My boss was the one that called them and he convinced me to talk with them. They supported me in my own home. They never tried to make me leave my partner - instead they supported both me and my partner to learn new ways of communicating and encouraged us to do Stopping Violence courses. We now have a healthier relationship and two children together. We are by no means the perfect couple but we now know how to use the tools required to avoid full-scale conflict." - **A survivor of domestic violence**