



Challenging the judgments of others

The many myths about domestic violence stem from a lack of true understanding about the reality of living in fear. These myths help continue violence by making the abuser's actions seem okay or excusable, stopping women from seeking help, and stopping others from helping them. Here are some common myths explained:.

Myth: It's just one bash

FACT: When one act of physical violence occurs, there's usually been a long period of threats, controlling behaviour, mind games, verbal abuse, and other forms of psychological and emotional violence beforehand. Many victims say this is worse than the physical violence.

Myth: If it was really that bad they would leave

FACT: It's not the victim's responsibility to avoid the violence; it's the abuser's responsibility to stop being violent. There are many reasons why women stay with someone who has been violent towards them

Myth: Violence only happens in poor/Māori/uneducated families

FACT: Domestic violence happens in all types of families; in urban and rural communities; in all ethnic and religious groups; and in rich, poor and middle-class families of any age and size.

Myth: "They were asking for it"

FACT: The responsibility for violence lies firmly with the abuser. No one deserves or 'asks' to be beaten or emotionally abused, least of all by someone who says they love you. Abusers often blame the victim for provoking them, but no behaviour justifies a violent or intimidating response. Children can be disciplined in other ways. Family and relationship problems can be fixed without violence. There is no excuse for violence.



Myth: The violence happens when the abuser loses it, or gets angry

FACT: Most people who get angry don't use violence to deal with it. There are many other ways to manage anger. Abusers make the choice to be violent, and about whom they choose to abuse (such as their partner or whānau or family member, but not their workmates and neighbours). Abusers can be calm and calculating when they're violent, using force to try and get their own way, so domestic violence is not just because they have an anger management problem.

Myth: Women are just as violent as men

FACT: In all family domestic violence statistics in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the vast majority of victims of violence are women and the majority of violent perpetrators are men. This is the same across the world. Some women are violent towards their children and partners, but the causes and effects of women's violence are often different than men's violence. It's unusual for men to be seriously injured or killed by a woman, and very few men live in fear of their lives because of their female partner's violence.