




SELF-HELP CHECK-IN:

Are you or
someone you
know experiencing
physical or
non-physical
domestic violence?



If you think you or someone you know may be in an abusive relationship, including non-physical violence like coercion and controlling behaviour, but you are not sure, read the following questions to help you see the signs and know what to do next.

The first thing you need to know about domestic violence or any kind of spousal abuse is that there's no shame in it, in any of its forms. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse, financial and social bullying, coercive and controlling behaviour are all prevalent problems across every Australian community, causing incredible harm to millions of Australians of all ages, race, and financial status.

Whether you're worried about your own relationship, or you think someone you know may be suffering behind the scenes, understanding the signs of all kinds of abuse is the first crucial tool that will help you take action to stop the harm being caused.

It's important to remember that domestic violence is not always physical, or constant. Something that happened five or 10 years ago that you've decided isn't actual abuse, or that now it's so long ago it doesn't matter, can still be a sign of emotional damage and physical danger in the future.

The following questions, compiled by leading Sydney Family Law specialist Antunes Lawyers, takes less than five minutes to read and could be the beginning of changing a life for the better – starting today.



1 - coercive & controlling abuse

You may be experiencing **coercive abuse** even if you're not aware of it. Any behaviour, no matter how subtle or inconsistent, used to control, cause harm, punish or frighten you may be a sign of coercive abuse and worse behaviour to come. Thankfully now there is legislation which recognises coercive abuse.

The following question lists just some of the methods used to commit coercive abuse, but it's by no means conclusive, this behaviour can take any form.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Deprived you of basic needs, such as food, monitored your time and your activity throughout the day - perhaps with hidden cameras - denied you freedom and taken control over aspects of your everyday life, such as where you can go, who you can see, what you can do or wear?

Have they behaved in a controlling or manipulative way, such as isolating you from friends or support networks, with emotional manipulation, by controlling finances, intimidating or scary behaviour, undermining your independence or self-worth, or 'gaslighting' to sow self-doubt and confusion in your mind?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

2 - spiritual & cultural abuse

Spiritual and cultural abuse

is a form of domestic and family violence that may be part of a broader and complex pattern of behaviour involving physical, psychological, sexual and economic abuse. Spiritual and cultural abuse have unique dimensions where spirituality or cultural identity is central to the victim's way of life, sense of purpose and wellbeing.

Spiritual and cultural abuse is used by perpetrators to exercise dominance, control or coercion over someone who may be especially vulnerable due to their spirituality or cultural identity.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Belittled your spiritual or cultural worth, beliefs or practices, violated or prevented your spiritual or cultural practices, denied access to your spiritual or cultural community, caused you to transgress spiritual or cultural obligations or prohibitions, controlled religious or spiritual practices or choices, enforced unwanted practices, or committed mental or physical abuse under the excuse of spiritual doctrine or cultural norms?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

3 - social abuse

Social abuse is behaviour that aims to cut you off from your family, friends, or community. It can also involve a person trying to damage your relationships with others. People who are socially abusive may also attempt to make you look bad or ruin your reputation.

Social abuse can include things done in the home, in public, over the phone, or on the internet and social media. This question lists some of the key signs that social abuse is taking place, but it's not conclusive.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Stopped you from seeing friends, leaving the house or performing activities, insisted on knowing your every move, interfered with your mail, phone, email or social media, shared private photos or videos of you without your consent, spread lies or damaging information about you, controlled where you go, who you see, who you talk to, or what you dress like?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

4 - financial abuse

Financial abuse occurs when money is used as a means to gain power and control over another person. Financial abuse can trap people in an abusive relationship, and may also impact on their ability to stay safe if they decide to leave.

Financial abuse involves any attempt to control someone's ability to acquire, use, and maintain financial resources to gain power and control in a relationship. This question lists some examples but not all.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Restricted or unfairly controlled money, access to bank accounts or financial documents, forced you to have to ask for money, stolen money from you, forced you into unwanted transactions or loans, or prevented you from earning?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

5 - verbal abuse

Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling, bullying, demeaning, frightening, intimidating, yelling, screaming, or swearing. The objective of verbal abuse is to have control through intimidating you into submission.

This question lists some examples of verbal abuse, but it can take any form. However subtle the behaviour may be, the effects can still be incredibly damaging.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Insulted, humiliated or ridiculed you, given you the silent treatment, engaged in name calling, tried to scare, isolate or control you, or blamed you for their own bad behaviour (i.e. you made me do this)?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

6 - emotional abuse

If being around your partner or a family member makes you feel scared, confused and unlike yourself, or if you doubt yourself when you're talking with them, or they make you feel less worthy or independent, you may be experiencing **emotional abuse**.

You may feel that there is no way out, but that's not the case, plenty of professional help is on hand. Some examples of emotional abuse follow in the question, but it can take many forms.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Yelled at you, insulted you or swore at you, gaslighted you to make you doubt your own intuition or sanity, tried to harm your relationships or humiliate you in front of your peers, followed or tracked your every move incessantly, isolated you from family or social groups, stopped you doing something you want or need to do, or sought to control finances in a way that limits your life, or used loved ones and children to manipulate situations?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

7 - psychological abuse

Psychological abuse, often called emotional abuse, is characterized by subjecting another person to behaviour that can result in mental trauma including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder.

The methods of psychological abuse can range from embarrassing you in public to threatening to harm you, your loved ones or your pets. The question below gives a few examples, but not all.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Enforced isolation, prevented social or professional activity, failed to respect privacy, intimidated, harassed, threatened violence or abandonment, threatened self-harm or suicide, spread rumours or gaslighted to social groups, or strived to put a wedge in relationships?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

8 - stalking abuse

Stalking abuse in terms of domestic violence is the act of repeatedly harassing you with unwanted contact or attention. The behaviour is often relentless and makes you feel like you can't escape. And with today's technology and connectivity, the platforms for stalking abuse are many and varied.

Stalking behaviour may seem friendly at first and, although it typically gets worse over time, the lines are already blurred and can confuse you into silence. The below examples are not a definitive list.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Repeatedly emailed, messaged or called, followed you around or turned up uninvited at inappropriate locations like work, snooped on you, trolled you on social media, tracked your devices or hacked any of your accounts?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

9 - sexual abuse

Sexual abuse refers to any sexual contact or behavior without explicit consent of the victim, including rape, attempted rape, forcing or demanding unwanted sexual acts such as oral sex and penetration, and unwanted sexual touching or fondling.

There is no such thing as a 'typical' sex abuser, but the majority in nature are manipulative, deceptive, narcissistic, sexist, secretive, and entitled.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Insisted on or physically forced unwanted sexual acts, demanded sex on their conditions, denied sex, applied unwanted aggression or caused unwanted pain during sex, or bullied you about sexual choices such as contraception?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

10 - physical abuse

Domestic physical abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of social, educational, or financial status. Many people experiencing physical abuse in a relationship may try to cover up what is happening to them for a variety of reasons, including shame, fear, and a feeling of being trapped.

But there is no shame in experiencing physical abuse, it's a huge problem in every corner of Australian society and help is available from support organisations and improved abuse legislation.

QUESTION:

Has your partner, or the partner of someone you know, recently or at any time in the past:

Pushed or shoved you, slapped, pinched, choked, kicked you, hurt children, denied medical support or abused pets?
Have you been subject to any inappropriate or unwanted use of drugs or physical restraints, or any unwanted sexual contact?

☐ YES / ☐ NO / ☐ I SUSPECT BUT DON'T KNOW FOR SURE

Did you answer **YES**
to any of the 10 questions?

If you've answered 'YES' to any of the questions above, or if you're not sure what you're experiencing is abuse, we strongly recommend seeking confidential advice from a trained professional.

There are a number of domestic abuse helplines and support services where you can speak in complete confidence with a specialist, who will help you decide what to do next and give you ongoing assistance on your journey from here.

1800RESPECT
NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT, DOMESTIC
FAMILY VIOLENCE COUNSELLING SERVICE

National Sexual Assault, Domestic
Family Violence Counselling Service:
1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)

 **Lifeline**

Lifeline - 24/7 Crisis Support:
13 11 14

Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia – information
on relationship support services:
1300 364 277

kidshelpline 
Anytime Any Reason

Kids Helpline:
1800 551 800



Australian Government
A joint Australian, state and territory government initiative

Each State or Territory offers further
localised support service, find yours here:
respect.gov.au/services



centrelink

Centrelink offers a crisis payment to help
you with immediate financial concerns:
13 28 50

Some banks offer support for customers experiencing domestic and family violence.

If you need immediate help call 000



If you need us,
confidential legal help
is on hand
(free consultation)

Antunes Lawyers is a Family Law specialist, with a team of expert practitioners in the law around all types of physical and non-physical domestic violence, including new legislation on more nuanced forms of abuse such as coercive and controlling behaviour.

For a completely free, completely confidential consultation with a Family Law specialist, please call Antunes on **XXXXXX XXXXX** or email **xxxxxxx@antunes.com.au**

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