

Myths and Reality



Some of the common myths and realities about family violence



■ MYTH 1

Victims should just leave abusive relationships – it's that easy!

REALITY

It's not that easy. Victims stay in abusive relationships for many reasons:

- fear the violence will get worse if they leave, they will be followed and harmed
- intimidation and control by the perpetrator
- believing violence is normal
- financial dependence
- social embarrassment
- lack of self-confidence
- isolation
- concern for children
- lack of community support.

■ MYTH 2

Family violence happens only to poor, uneducated women and women from certain cultures.

REALITY

Anyone can experience family violence. People of any class, culture, religion, sexual orientation, marital status and age can be victims or perpetrators of family violence. Because people with money usually have more access to resources, poorer people tend to use community agencies, and are therefore more visible.

■ MYTH 3

Family violence is a private matter.

REALITY

Family violence is not a private matter. It is a criminal offence in Australia. Family violence impacts everyone in the community. It impacts on the victim's ability to lead a productive life and affects children and families.

■ MYTH 4

Most people who commit violence are under the effects of alcohol or drugs.

REALITY

Although many perpetrators also abuse alcohol and/or drugs, and some are more likely to be physically violent or use more extreme violence when their judgement is impaired, this is not the underlying cause of the abuse. Many people who abuse alcohol or drugs are not violent and abusive.

■ MYTH 5

Perpetrators are mentally ill, psychopathic or have a personality disorder.

REALITY

Research does not support this view. Most who use violence against family members demonstrate acceptable behaviour in other settings. Many are considered respectable members of the community, and other people are often reluctant to believe they could be abusive.