Men Abused by Their Partners

Who this is for
This fact sheet is for you if:
- You are a man who is concerned for your safety and/or depressed because your female partner is mistreating you.
- You are wondering if your partner’s actions are abuse.

In this fact sheet, the word partner means wife, common-law partner, or ex-partner who is female.

You are not alone
If you are a man who is experiencing abuse from your female partner, you are not alone. This type of abuse is not uncommon but is not widely discussed or reported.

It takes courage for you to acknowledge and report it. You can find more information on this topic at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/publications/mlintima-eng.php. Studies show that men at greater risk of experiencing abuse include younger men, Aboriginal men, men in common-law relationships, and men whose partners have high levels of conflict and stress in other areas of life.

What abuse means
Abuse in relationships includes behaviour ranging from threats to physical or sexual assault. It may also include financial, emotional, and verbal actions that are harmful.

A man is abused when a woman uses abuse or violence to gain power and control over him. Often, the abuser blames the abuse on the victim. Remember that abuse is the abuser’s fault. Abuse against you is not your fault.

Abuse can be physical, emotional or verbal, psychological, sexual, and/or financial. For example:
- **Physical abuse** can be stopping you from leaving your home; breaking your things, damaging property, or threatening to damage something you value; threatening or hurting you with a weapon or any object; and/or hitting, shoving, slapping, biting, choking, punching, or kicking you.
- **Emotional or verbal abuse** can be humiliating you, yelling at you, insulting you, or calling you names; constantly criticizing you and blaming you for everything; preventing you from contacting friends and family; and/or accusing you of having or wanting to have sex with others.
- **Psychological abuse** can be controlling and limiting your access to information, what you do, where you go, or who you see; opening and reading your mail or other private papers; monitoring your phone calls; following you or watching you wherever you are; repeatedly phoning and/or emailing you; and/or threatening to hurt you or herself and your children, someone you know, or a pet.
- **Sexual abuse** can be forcing you into sexual activity when you do not want it; forcing you to perform sexual acts that make you uncomfortable or hurt you; and/or injuring sexual parts of your body without your consent.
- **Financial abuse** can be controlling the money in your household and not letting you have any; making all the money decisions; not letting you use bank accounts and credit cards; not giving you money for food or medical treatment; taking money from you; and/or running up debts in your name.

Abuse that is against the law
Certain types of abuse are more harmful than others and are against the law — these are crimes. Two examples of abuse that are crimes are assault and criminal harassment (sometimes called stalking).

- **Assault** is the most common type of crime an abuser is charged with. Assault can be physical or sexual. Physical assault is when your partner hits or hurts you, or threatens to hit or hurt you, and you believe that can and will happen. Sexual assault is when anything sexual happens to you without your agreement, and includes unwanted kissing, sexual touching, and forced intercourse.
- **Criminal harassment or stalking** is when someone forces unwanted and continued attention on you. It is a pattern of threats and actions that makes you afraid for your safety and your children’s safety. It is against the law for your partner to contact you again and again by phone and/or email, follow you, threaten you, or threaten to destroy your property.

Why you might stay
There are many reasons why you might stay with your abusive partner. One reason may be our society’s beliefs and attitudes about how men and women are expected to act. For example, our society expects men to be independent and strong and to protect women, not be abused by them.

Repeated psychological and emotional abuse over time lowers confidence and self-esteem. You may begin to believe that you have not met society’s idea of what a man’s role is and that you deserve the abuse. Such beliefs make it difficult for a man to leave an abusive relationship.

Other reasons why you are staying in an abusive relationship may include:

- You want the relationship to continue because you love your partner and sometimes she acts loving and kind.
- You feel you are financially dependent on the abuser, especially if you have a disability.
- You fear for your children’s safety and want to protect them.
- You do not want to lose access to your children.
- You think that if you ask for help, no one will believe the abuse happened, including the police, family, friends, support services, and the legal system.
- You are in denial that you are in an abusive relationship (believing “it is not that bad” or “I am a man and can deal with it”).
- You have no social supports because you are isolated from your family and friends.
- You do not know about your legal rights or support services that can help you.
• You feel isolated and pressured to stay because of problems with language, racism, family or community pressures, or because of religious, cultural, or our society’s beliefs.

You can get help

Because you are in an abusive relationship, you may feel embarrassed, ashamed, depressed, frustrated, guilty, and/or afraid and may not want to tell anyone or ask for help. Abuse in relationships is not a private family matter. You can get help, whether you want to stay in the relationship or leave. Start by telling someone you trust and who you think will believe you about the abuse. Make a safety plan (action plan) that sets out steps you can take to protect yourself when abuse happens (see the fact sheet “Safety Planning”). There are support services in BC to help.

Help from the police

You have the right to be free from abuse. If you are being assaulted or criminally harassed, call 911 or the emergency police or RCMP number listed inside the front cover of your phone book. If you do not speak English, you can ask 911 for an interpreter. Police can help when abuse is happening or after it has happened.

Abuse in relationships often happens more than once.

To help the police with your case, make notes about every time you are assaulted or threatened. Include the following information in your notes:

• What happened
• The date and time of the abuse
• Where the abuse happened
• How you or your children were hurt
• Who else saw what happened

Community help

• Community services provide support, counselling, and information. Some organizations offer support services specifically for men such as:
  BC Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Assault
  604-682-6482 (in Greater Vancouver)
  1-888-682-6482 (call no charge, elsewhere in BC)
  www.bc-malesurvivors.com

Legal help

• If you cannot pay for a lawyer, the Legal Services Society (legal aid) may provide a free lawyer. Call the Provincial Call Centre at 604-408-2172 (in Greater Vancouver) or 1-866-577-2525 (no charge, elsewhere in BC). Legal aid also offers free, brief legal advice through its Family LawLINE (same phone numbers) and family duty counsel (lawyers) at courts. See the legal aid website at www.legalaid.bc.ca or, for family law information, see www.familylaw.lss.bc.ca.

This fact sheet explains the law in general. It is not intended to give you legal advice on your particular problem. This fact sheet is one of a series produced by the Legal Services Society, BC.

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