

A Quick, Practical Introduction

For Church people to support someone who is being abused

Abuse in relationships is quite common and is mainly committed by men against women. Some women are abusive in relationships.

This resource will introduce you to supporting female and male victims of abuse. Throughout, we refer to the victim as 'she' for simplicity and because the majority of victims are women.

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended, among many other things, that we train our church leadership, they heard that often the advice given wasn't helpful because the faith leader didn't know what kind of advice to give.

Anecdotally and via research we know that there are people in our churches who are experiencing abuse. Our role is to support those who are speaking about their experiences, and to provide a safe church community.

This resource will guide you, as a church leader or lay person, to support someone who is experiencing abuse.

We recommend that you attend training to gain a greater understanding and become more confident. However, by using the information on this sheet, you will be able to make a difference in an abused person's life.

What is Abuse?

- Abuse is when one person dominates or tries to dominate another.
- Abuse happens because the abuser wants to control the other person.
- Abusers believe they have a right to control or make decisions for another person.

Signs & Symptoms

- You might have a 'sense' that something is wrong.
- Sometimes signs are obvious but often they are subtle.

Your support can make a difference

- Emotional support is vital. You can affirm that what is happening is abuse and it's not her fault.
- Listen, believe, and accept her story.
- Encourage her to be independent.
- Support her to make decisions and to take charge of her life again.

Recognising Abuse

These are some of the signs that someone is being abused.

- She seems afraid of her partner.
- She seems very anxious to please him or her.
- She has stopped seeing her friends or family.
- He always knows where she is and what she is doing.
- She cuts phone conversations short when he is in the room.
- He makes all the decisions, controls the money or tells her who she can see and what she can do.
- She talks about his 'jealousy', bad temper' or 'possessiveness'.
- She has become anxious or depressed.
- She has lost her confidence or is unusually quiet.
- She gives unlikely explanations for physical injuries.
- Her children seem afraid of him.

What helps:

'Friends saying, 'We know you're telling the truth'.

- Listen, believe & be patient
- Ask if they are safe
- Name abuse as abuse
- Give details of services
- Accept their choices
- Follow up

What doesn't help:

'He [priest] actually told me that my responsibility as a wife was to do whatever my husband told me to do.'

- Acting on the person's behalf without her consent
- Telling her what to do
- Recommending couple counselling or marriage courses
- Contacting or confronting him

Working in partnership

- Family violence, domestic abuse is a specialist area of counselling
- A vital role we have is to refer them to the relevant service and support them to attend these services
- Churches and church people can be a source of blessing by providing non-specialist support to women and children, and men alongside professional services

Where to Get Support

1800 RESPECT

The national counselling, helpline information and support 24/7.

☎ 1800 737 732

🌐 www.1800respect.org.au

Men's Referral Service

Provide telephone counselling, information and referrals for men in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania.

☎ 1300 766 491

🌐 www.ntv.org.au

Homework: Look up your local family violence service contact details, to have on hand.

Secondary Consultation: The above numbers, including your local service, will provide support and advice for you while you are supporting someone.

More Information

I trust this has given you a brief introduction to supporting someone who is being abused. I expect that its brevity may have raised questions or challenges for you. Need to know more? Contact me!

☎ 0409 950 855

✉ contact@julietyler.com.au

🌐 www.julietyler.com.au



About Julie Tyler

Julie has spent the last 17 years in her professional life raising awareness of violence against women and how to prevent it.

It is preventable, and Julie believes that the Christian community holds the key to being the leaders in prevention.

Julie's aim is to build knowledge and understanding as the church family to be able to prevent, respond and provide hope and healing.