

## fact sheet #5. HOW CAN I SPEAK OUT?

We all know that violence against women is wrong, but it's not always easy to speak out about it. Both men and women can feel embarrassed, ashamed, resentful, confronted or just ambivalent about violence against women.

**There are lots of reasons why it can be difficult to talk about violence:**

- Our community might not think violence is a problem – they might treat us like we are making a big deal about nothing.
- Both men and women might feel confronted or challenged at the thought of changing their behaviour and attitudes about violence.
- People might believe that what happens in the home is a private matter and shouldn't be discussed in public.
- We might not feel like we know the facts or the 'right' things to say.
- Women might be worried that they'll be accused of being a 'man-hater' or a 'lesbian'. Men who speak up against violence are often worried they'll be labelled 'gay' or less masculine.
- People might think that the only kind of domestic and family violence is physical violence.
- The person we are talking to may be a perpetrator or a victim of violence and not want anyone to find out.

Violence against women is sometimes described as a 'hidden problem' because people do not like to talk about it. Speaking out about violence against women is everyone's responsibility!

**Talking about violence against women can be difficult. The best way to respond to difficult questions is to:**

- ✓ Acknowledge and validate what the person has said
- ✓ Challenge any myths or attitudes and beliefs that support violence
- ✓ Inform the person of the facts in a way that is easy to understand

Don't worry if you don't have all the answers or facts right away. It's okay to leave a conversation and come back to it later when you have done some research.



**1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**

A free 24 hour national domestic and family violence and sexual assault counselling service for people who have experienced violence, and for workers supporting them.

# ARTS, SONG AND DRAMA

Arts, song, and drama can be an effective way of speaking out about violence against women. Songs such as Archie Roach's *Walking Into Doors*, send a powerful message about ending violence.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 How can we start a conversation about violence against women in our community? How can we engage 'hard to reach' groups?
- 2 How can we convince people that reducing violence against women is everyone's responsibility?
- 3 How can we talk about violence against women in a way that empowers people to take action?
- 4 What is the best way to deal with people who become disruptive or aggressive when we talk about violence against women?

## QUICK COMEBACKS

Here are some quick responses to some of the most common questions and comments that people might make about violence against women.

**Q: But what about all the women who abuse men?**

**A:** It is true that sometimes women are violent towards men, however research continually shows that the majority of victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are women. Resources and services need to respond to this research.

**Q: Violence is not a big problem in the country...**

**A:** Actually research has shown that violence against women is a problem all over Australia, including in country areas. Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it doesn't happen.

**Q: Aren't you accusing all men of being violent?**

**A:** No! The majority of men choose to not abuse women, but unfortunately they often do not speak out about it either. One of the most effective ways of ending violence against women is for men to speak out against it.

**Q: What did she expect? Dressing like that!**

**A:** No one ever deserves violence because of what they are wearing! Men need to take responsibility for their behaviour, not blame women for their choice of outfit.

**Q: If it's so bad, why doesn't she just leave?**

**A:** Sometimes it's hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships. They might be scared, ashamed, or have nowhere else to go. They may think that staying in a violent relationship is what is best for the children, or her partner or other family members might convince her that she should stay. Women may not know what services are available to help. Leaving a violent relationship can be more dangerous than staying if a woman does not have proper support and protection.

**Q: Violence is just part of their culture...**

**A:** Violence against women happens in all cultures – but that doesn't make it okay. All women have the right to live free from violence regardless of their culture.



This is 5 in a series of 15 fact sheets to help communities stop violence against women before it happens. Download the full set at [www.nrwn.org.au](http://www.nrwn.org.au)