



# Teenhelp

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## Domestic Abuse - Is it against the law?

**Q. Is domestic abuse against the law ?**

**A.** Yes, some forms of abuse are against the law, but not all. Physical violence or intimidation is a crime. Emotional abuse is not necessarily against the law but can be just as damaging as physical abuse.

The law provides protection against domestic abuse and recognises people's right to safety and to live free from violence. Courts can order a person not to use violence or intimidation in the home (this is called a Safety Order) or they can order the abusive person to leave the home (this is called a Barring Order).

**Q. If my parent is abusive, does that mean I will be too?**

*It will help to talk to someone you trust about your worries and concerns.*

**A.** No, it doesn't have to be that way. How you behave is a choice you make. Some people who have experienced domestic abuse go on to abuse others, but many others in the same situation do not. It is common to feel anger or other strong emotions if you have witnessed or experienced domestic abuse, but this does not mean you will abuse others.

It will help to talk to someone you trust about your worries and concerns. Sometimes seeing a family therapist or counsellor can help young people who have lived with domestic abuse to



understand and deal with their feelings. This can help in developing healthy relationships in the future.



**If there is abuse in my family, am I more likely to be in a violent relationship when I'm older?**



Not all young people who experience domestic abuse go on to have violent or abusive relationships, but some do. Violence in dating relationships can be more likely where either or both young people have experienced abuse. This can be because young people have come to expect and accept violence as a part of couple relationships and think that this is normal. In other instances, abuse or violence can be triggered in response to stress, rejection or jealousy. If you are concerned about the possibility of abuse in any of your relationships, think about how you are feeling in the relationship and ask yourself. Am I being abused? Am I being abusive? Remember it is always helpful to talk with someone you trust.