

## ONE BLOW IS ONE TOO MANY

Have you or somebody close to you been the victim of domestic violence? Are you distressed, angry or scared? Do you wonder what you should or could do and whom to turn to in order to get help, support and practical advice? Would you like to discuss your experience of violence with somebody who knows what to do, who has time and who understands what this experience can mean to you? If so, please read this text carefully.

### **Seek help**

Violence will not stop on its own. Therefore, the victim is advised to be active and seek help. In this situation, the victim needs support from her/his close ones. While violence may not occur every day, it can be felt as a threatening presence. If the vicious circle is not broken, violence may become more brutal and frequent.

Help is available both to victims and batterers. Do not hesitate to seek professional help to find a solution for yourself and your close one. Everybody is entitled to a safe, nonviolent life.

### **What is spousal and non-spousal abuse?**

Violence occurring in a relationship may involve physical abuse – pushing, beating-up and sexual violence. There can also be mental pressure – name-calling, disparaging comments, intimidation and threats. Spousal and non-spousal abuse can mean that you are being held isolated at home without food and money. Violence can also result in destructing of property or using economic control for emotional blackmailing.

Violence is regrettably common. Violence can happen between partners or within families. The victim can also be a child or an elderly parent. Usually the victim is a woman: the perpetrator's wife or common-law wife, girlfriend, sister or elderly mother. The perpetrator can be the victim's husband or common-law husband, boyfriend, brother or grown son. The perpetrator can also be a woman.

The consequences of violence can be extremely traumatic for the victim. The longer the person has endured violence, the more severe the consequences are. Violence can cause pain, agony, anxiety, feelings of insecurity and hopelessness, despondency, pent-up anger, mental ill-health, substance abuse and other problems.

### **It may be difficult to seek help, but there is always hope in every situation**

It is not easy for a victim of domestic violence to seek help. And the longer the violence lasts, the harder it will get to seek help. Many find it hard to accept that they are victims of domestic violence. Feelings of guilt and shame, and the solidarity victim feels with the members of her/his family, make seeking for help even harder. The situation can be especially difficult for a man whose spouse is violent. But it is important to remember that there is always hope, and it is possible to break free from the vicious circle of violence. Many people have successfully left their violent relationships. In addition, some perpetrators have agreed to participate in treatment programs, where they can start the process of dealing with their aggression and violent behavior.

### **Prevalence of violence**

According to a study published by Statistics Finland in 1998, 40 per cent of Finnish women had experienced physical or sexual abuse or threat by men. A fifth of the women responding reported

having faced violence in their present relationship. During the year preceding the survey, some 90,000 women had experienced physical violence perpetrated by men.

### **Violence in the family always inflicts damage on the children**

It is always harmful for a child to experience domestic violence. It increases the child's risk of becoming a victim to violence. The child can also be used as a tool to exert pressure. Witnessing violent conflicts has a damaging effect on the child. Children may often blame themselves and think that the violence occurring in the family is their fault. People who have been exposed to violence in their childhood may become victims or victimizers themselves. However, this does not have to be the case: the vicious circle can be broken.

### **Nothing justifies violence**

There is no excuse or justification for violent behavior. The threat of divorce, jealousy, fear of abandonment, sexual rejection, difficult childhood, economic situation or inadequate housing conditions do not justify using violence against another person. One blow is one too many.

### **Violence is a crime**

In Finland, causing bodily harm to someone in a private or public place constitutes a felony subject to official prosecution. Therefore, an act of violence occurring in the privacy of someone's home may result in seeking an indictment even though the victim has not pressed charges. However, the incident must be reported to the police.

### **The Finnish Act on the Restraining Order**

In force since 1999, the Finnish Act on the Restraining Order aims to prevent crime and to provide better possibilities to intervene in serious cases of harassment and threats of violence. A person subject to a restraining order is not allowed to meet or otherwise contact the person being protected, nor can he or she follow and observe the protected person.

You can apply for a restraining order from the police or directly from the district court. A person who has acted violently or threatened to do so can also be denied access to a certain area, such as the victim's home, school or workplace and their environs. Victim Support Finland provides help for the victim in applying for a restraining order. For additional information on the restraining order, please refer to [www.poliisi.fi](http://www.poliisi.fi).

### **Help and support is available**

The victim of domestic violence may find it difficult to tell about her/his situation to the authorities. There are, however, many organizations which offer help and support.

### **Contact information**

#### **Non-governmental organizations:**

Victim Support Finland ([www.riku.fi](http://www.riku.fi))

- Finnish help line 0203-16116 (in Finnish)
- Legal help line 0203-16117 (in Finnish)
- Help Line 0203-16118 (in Finnish and English)
- Internet Service [www.rikunet.fi](http://www.rikunet.fi) (in Finnish, Swedish and English)

*Tukinainen* – the Rape Crisis Centre ([www.tukinainen.fi](http://www.tukinainen.fi))

- Helpline 0800-97899
- Legal counselling 0800-97895

Monika-Naiset Liitto ry.- Multicultural Women's Association (09) 6922304 ([www.monikanaiset.fi](http://www.monikanaiset.fi))  
The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters, inquiries (09) 4542440 online 24 hours  
([www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi](http://www.ensijaturvakotienliitto.fi))

*Lyömätön linja* – help for men who have been abusive or violent towards their partner (09) 276  
6280 ([www.lyomatonlinja.fi](http://www.lyomatonlinja.fi)).

*Miehen Linja* – help for immigrant men who have been abusive or violent towards their partner (09)  
27662899 ([www.lyomatonlinja.fi](http://www.lyomatonlinja.fi))

*Jussi* activities for men, inquiries (09) 4542440 ([www.jussityo.fi](http://www.jussityo.fi))

**Authorities:**

General emergency number 112 (only in the case of emergency)

Police

Health centres, family clinics, family counseling centres or social welfare offices in your locality.

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National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES)

(currently National Institute for Health and Welfare THL)

(Information updated and edited 1/2009 by Victim Support Finland)