

# A guide to support people who seek help for their abusive behaviour

If someone you know has confessed to you that they have been using violent or controlling behaviour, it is important to treat their confession with utmost seriousness and to:

- Name the behaviour for what it is – Abuse.
- Tell them that the behaviour has to stop.
- Encourage them to think about the harm their actions are causing.
- Encourage them to call the Men's Referral Service –1300 766 491

**Be careful.** Don't place yourself in a position where the person who is being abusive could harm or manipulate you. Don't try to intervene directly if you witness a person being assaulted – call the police instead.

If the person who is being abusive is your friend, relative, work colleague, you may feel caught in the middle. It is important to understand that if you approach the person who is abusive, he or she may:

- Tell you to 'mind your own business'
- Deny the abuse, or say 'how can you think I could do something like that?'
- Make it seem like it's 'not that bad', or that it only happened once
- Make it seem like it's the other person's fault, or that it's the other person's behaviour that is the problem
- Say that they couldn't help themselves, they were drunk, just 'snapped', or 'lost control'.

None of these responses mean that he or she is not abusive. It is common for a person who is being abusive to deny or minimise the abuse. People who seem 'respectable' and 'normal' can still be abusive in the privacy of their own home.

It is possible that the person who is abusive may admit the abuse was their fault, but say they don't know how to stop their behaviour.

They might also deny and minimise the abuse, but agree that something isn't right about how they act in certain situations. If the person who is abusive is male, he can be encouraged to call the **Men's Referral Service** for anonymous and confidential advice on how he may go about ending his use of violence. If the abusive person is female, she can contact her local **Community Health Service**.

## IMPORTANT THINGS NOT TO DO:

- Don't say that his behaviour doesn't matter.
- Don't assume that the abuse is minor or trivial.
- Don't accept excuses or allow them to blame others for their abusive behaviour.
- Don't focus on trying to understand why he is abusive.
- Don't try to make them feel better about their abusive behaviour.

People who are abusive can sound very persuasive when they try to deny, minimise or justify their behaviour, as they often make these excuses to themselves to feel better about what they are doing. Focus on what the person who is going to do about it, and encourage them to call **Men's Referral Service**.

## SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

**Men's Referral Service** – 1300 766 491 – National anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to help men stop using violent and controlling behaviour. 24 hours, 7 days a week. For more information visit [www.mrs.org.au](http://www.mrs.org.au)

**1800 RESPECT** – 1800 737 732 – National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling and advice service. 24 hours, 7 days a week.



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