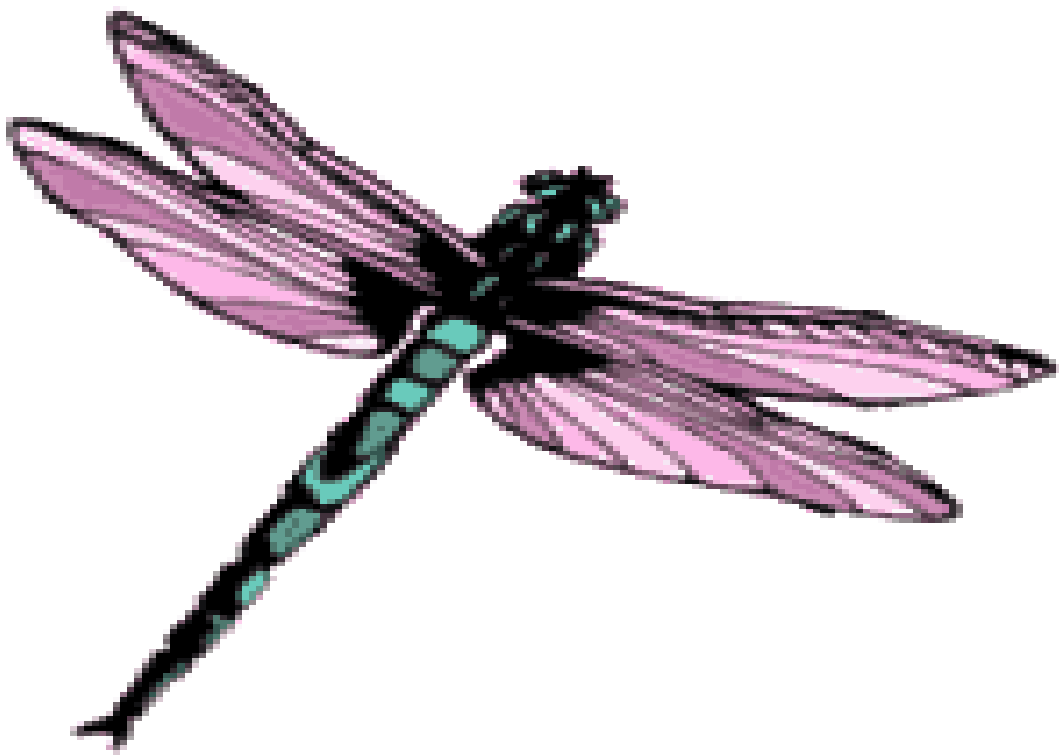


# **Living in Harmony**



## Living in Harmony

**Domestic violence happens to women with disabilities too. You can get help!**

### Acknowledgements

**These resources were produced with the financial assistance of Status of Women Canada and we gratefully acknowledge this invaluable resource.**

**We would like to thank the women with disabilities and service providers from around Saskatchewan who provided information, helped to organize focus groups, participated in focus groups and provided feedback and guidance on draft resources.**

**We would also like to thank: For providing the background research, support and the contacts that enabled the project to get started.**

- **Tara Smith - Administrative Assistant, SVOPD**
- **Shirley Bonk - Elder**
- **Allison Schmidt – Project Manager**
- **Bev Blakeley – Curriculum Development**
- **Bev Duncan – Project Supervisor**
- **Steering Committee:**
  - **Kama Soles**
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  - **Christine Malone**



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**A portion of this book was sponsored by students at SIAST Kelsey Campus, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, in conjunction with their V-Day fundraising campaign.**

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## **1. What is Domestic Violence?**

**Domestic violence occurs when someone who is close to a woman with a disability, who cares for her, or with whom she lives, has abusive behavior towards her or her children.**

**Domestic abuse is wrong. Women with disabilities do not have to live with it. They can get help.**

**Domestic abuse can happen where you live. Abuse can happen anywhere.**

**a) Domestic violence can hurt your body**

Punching, hitting or pushing is domestic violence. Physical violence also includes slapping, grabbing, shoving, choking, and shaking. Restraining you or moving your wheelchair around against your will, hiding things you need, or making you wear something you don't want to wear is domestic violence.

If someone who cares for you deliberately does not meet your special needs, this is neglect. When your caregiver does not feed or bathe you properly or give you your medication, it is considered neglect.

Forcing you to have sex when you do not want to is violence. Domestic violence can also be unwanted kissing, touching, or forcing you to look at things you do not want to look at, for example: videos, pictures, or bodies.

It is considered abuse if someone says that you have to have sex with them before they will help you.

**b) Domestic violence can cause you to become confused**

The person who is being violent towards you might do things that make you feel scared or sad. They may yell at you a lot, criticize, or insult you. Actions, statements, gestures, or behaviors that make you feel sad and not worthy are also abuse. It is important to remember that often women with disabilities are isolated and cannot talk and share their problems with others privately.

Any statements or threats that make you feel scared are examples of domestic violence. These may include threatening to hurt you or putting you into a facility. Threats to take your children away, report you to the authorities, tell rumours about you, or threaten to damage your possessions are forms of violence.

If someone tries to manipulate you it can cause you to be unsure about what you believe or want. They can, for example, try to make you believe you have had a drink

when you know you have not, you could become very confused. Criticizing your opinions, comparing you to someone else or trying to make you agree to something by arguing until you cannot bear it anymore and give in, is also abuse.

**If someone refuses to give you information or makes decisions for you without asking, when legally they are not allowed they are not respecting your rights.**

**c) Domestic violence can hurt all your relationships**

If someone stops you from seeing your family or friends, and makes it hard for you to talk to them, this is abuse. Controlling where you go and what you do, whom you see and talk to is also abuse. Embarrassing you or putting you down is also classified as abuse. Sometimes women with disabilities have mobility issues that prevents them from getting out and around without assistance. This can make you vulnerable, as you may require help to see friends, family, or persons who can help you.

**d) Domestic violence can hurt you financially**

If someone takes control of your money illegally or against your will, this is abuse. Not giving you the money you are entitled to, or not telling the truth about your financial status, may also be a way of controlling you financially. Making you financially dependent is a way to control you. Preventing you from obtaining or keeping a job, taking money from you or not leaving you enough money for your family live on is also considered abuse.

**e) Domestic violence can jeopardize personal property**

Destroying or threatening to destroy your belongings, threatening to hurt your pets or your service dog, or something with which you need to live independently, is also violence.

**f) Anyone can be violent**

The individual hurting you could be your husband, partner, friend, parent, child, another family member, caregiver, neighbour, or even a stranger.

**2. Domestic Violence can happen to anyone.**

It can happen to:

- 1 Rich or poor women
- 2 Women in urban or rural communities
- 3 Women of all ages and all cultures
- 4 Women in all relationships :Single, married, common-law, same sex
- 5 Women with or without a disability

## **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

### **Domestic violence is wrong**

It is wrong for anyone to hurt or threaten to hurt you. Most forms of domestic violence are considered criminal. All women need to understand that it is not their fault when someone is trying to abuse them.

**It's not your fault. Never, ever!**

### **a) Without action, domestic violence may not stop**

In fact, it often gets worse. Sometimes the abuser will be sorry and promise they will not do it again. You might feel the violence has stopped but then it starts again.

**Domestic violence is like this for many women.**

### **c) You can get help**

You have the right to feel safe. You do not have to live with domestic violence

There are people you can talk to, who can help.

## **3. What is the truth about Domestic Violence?**

People say lots of things about domestic violence. Sometimes, when you hear rumours over and over again, you might think that what you have heard must be true. But not everything people say is true. Sometimes people say things without knowing the facts.

When lots of people say and believe something that is not true, what they believe is called a "myth".

If you do not have all the facts, you might believe the myth. This can sometimes stop you from getting help, and make you think that you have to put up with domestic

violence.

**You don't have to put up with domestic violence.  
It's wrong. Always!**

#### **4. Here are some realities about domestic violence.**

**Myth: It can't be domestic violence because I'm not in a relationship.**

**Fact:** Domestic violence can happen to single women too.

The person hurting you could be your parent, child, another family member, a caregiver, or someone who shares your home.

It is wrong for anyone to hurt you. You do not have to live with violence. You can get help.

**Myth: They don't hit me, so it's not domestic violence**

**Fact:** Domestic violence can take many forms. Physical violence is only one kind. Domestic violence can hurt your body and hurt your sense of self. It can hurt your relationships with people, it can destroy your possessions, or it can hurt you financially.

All forms of violence are wrong and most are against the law.

**Myth: The law can not help me. I just have to put up with it.**

**Fact:** The law can help you, and you have the right to use the law to protect yourself.

If the person who is violent towards you is a spouse, partner, or another family member, you can always use domestic violence laws to protect yourself.

If the person who is violent towards you is not related to you, but cares for you, lives or works in your home, there are other laws that can protect you.

**Myth: They are violent towards me because of my disability**

**Fact:** Disability is not a reason for abuse. Domestic violence is when one person uses

force to get power over another person. It can happen to women with or without a disability.

If the person who is violent towards you is your caregiver, worker in your home, or a family member, they may already have some power over you. Violence happens because the person abuses power, not because you have a disability.

**Myth: If I try to get help, they will put me in a facility**

**Fact:** Many women with disabilities say that if they try to get the violent person to stop being violent, they are threatened they will be put in a facility, this is a threat. Threats that are made to scare you are a form of domestic violence.

**Myth: No one will believe me**

**Fact:** There are people who will believe you. There are people who understand domestic violence. There are people who can help you.

If you tell someone and they do not believe you, tell someone else. Keep talking to people until someone believes you. Don't give up. You have the right to feel safe where you live. You have the right to get help.

## **5. What are my rights?**

**You have the same rights as everyone else. Here are some of your rights:**

- 1 You have the right to live in a safe place, free from abuse and violence.
- 2 You have the right to control your life and make your own decisions and choices.
- 3 You have the right to supports so you can control your life.
- 4 You have the right to choose friends, have sex, choose contraception, practice safe sex, marry, and have children.
- 5 You also have the right to choose not to have sex, not to marry or not to have children.
- 6 You have the right to full information about your choices and time to consider the information before you make a decision.
- 7 You have the right to change your mind.
- 8 You have the right to police protection and legal protection, if you need it.
- 9 You have the right to make your own decisions about how, where and with whom you want to live.
- 10 You have the right to ask for help so you can exercise these rights

**No one has to live with domestic violence. You can get help. You have the right to feel safe and free where you live.**

## 6. Excuses the Abuser may use.

Most often the abuser blames the victim of abuse for causing the violence. Some of the excuses an abuser may use to avoid taking responsibility for their actions are:

- **Trivialization** - the abuser will attempt to make you believe the abuse was less than it actually was.
- **Denial** - the abuser may say they did no actual harm to you, or that the abuse never took place.
- **Blame** - the abuser may blame you for what happened and say that it is your fault.
- **Isolation** - the abuser may say that no one will believe you that only you and the abuser know what happened, and that there are no witnesses.
- **Justification** - the abuser may try to make an argument to explain why they were violent. They may say "they were tired, or stressed."
- **Avoiding Responsibility** - Your actions did not cause the abuse. The abuser may say if you had not done a certain thing the abuse would not have happened.
- **Guilt** - the abuser may use your past history as an excuse for continuing the abuse.
- **Criticizing your mental abilities** - the abuser may say you are "crazy" and "no one" will believe you.

## 7. What can I do?

**You can get help.** You do not have to put up with domestic violence.

If someone where you live is being violent towards you, here are some of the things that you can do.

### a) Tell someone what is happening to you.

**In an emergency, call the police.**

If you are in danger, call the police on 911. Tell them you need help **now** and ask them to come. They can use the law to protect you.

### b) Talk to someone you trust.

If you have someone that you can trust - a friend, family member, a pastor, or a caregiver you could talk to them. Tell them what is happening to you and how it makes you feel. You can ask this person to help you make contact with services that can help



- like Transition Houses/Shelters, or the police.

### **c) Make yourself as safe as you can**

Many women say that they do not want to leave their home. They just want the violence to stop. If you choose to stay where you are, try to make yourself as safe as possible. It is your right to stay in your home and have the abuser removed.

Find out about your options and know who can help you. Sometimes this helps you feel more in control of your situation and your safety.

### **d) Plan for you safety if you need to leave quickly**

It is useful to make a safety plan in case you have to leave immediately, you will be ready. If you have children, plan for their safety too. Set up this plan when you are not in a crisis situation. Teach your children the signs of needing to leave. Practice an escape plan with them.

## **Planning for your safety**

### **Here are some suggestions to include in your safety plan:**

- a. Where will you go if you need to leave quickly - a shelter, a friends place, or a family member's place? (Children are welcomed at most shelters).
- b. How will you get away? Do you need to get accessible transportation?
- c. Is there someone you trust who could help you leave quickly? If there is, let them know about your safety plan and how you would like them to help if you call.

### **Here are some actions you can take so that you will be ready:**

- Make a list of phone numbers of people who could help you. Important numbers might include:
  - police
  - a friend or family member that you trust
  - Women's Shelter/Transition House
  - Your nearest accessible transportation service
- Put aside some money in case you need a taxi. Find a secure place to hide money for an emergency. Do not use banks or financial institutions for this money as the accounts could be discovered.
- Pack an emergency bag and leave it with a trustworthy friend or family member or in another safe place you can easily get to. Gather together any special things

and important documents for you and your children. These might include:

- a spare key for your house
- photographs
- important documents (or copies of important documents) – for example:
  - a. Birth Certificate(s)
  - b. Healthcare Card(s)
  - c. Passport(s)
  - d. Bank books or details
  - e. Any medications you might need and any special information about your health
  - f. Restraining Orders
  - g. Divorce Papers
  - h. Social Insurance Cards

4. Take something meaningful for your children, like a favourite stuffed animal, toys, or books.

5. Go to a safe place like a women's shelter. Keep shelter and emergency numbers close at hand. Have change or a calling card for emergency calls. Call a shelter/transition house and talk to the staff. You may want to work out a code word so they know who you are if you have to call them in a crisis. Some shelters (but not all) are accessible for women in a wheelchair or with a mobility restriction. If you have a physical disability you should call your nearest shelter to make sure it is accessible.

6. Inform your children's daycare, school, etc., about who has permission to pick up your children. Make sure you keep them informed about your situation.

**KEEP A LIST OF IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS AND WRITE THEM ON THE PULL-OUT SHEET LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF THIS BOOKLET. YOU CAN FIND THE NUMBERS YOU NEED IN YOUR LOCAL TELEPHONE BOOK.**

## CONCLUSION

This booklet is a general overview of domestic violence against women with disabilities and is not meant to be a comprehensive review.

Reading this book is your first step towards living in harmony.  
*Safety Check List*

The purpose of this check list is to help you plan to leave an abusive situation quickly and safely.

## *Emergency Plan*

### Safety during a crisis situation

- Call 911 and yell loudly to alert neighbours.
- Arrange for a friend or neighbour to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- Have a code word to use with your children, family, friends or neighbours when you need the police.
- Use your right to protect your self until you are out of danger.

### Safety when planning to leave

- Build your independence by getting you own bank account and/or credit.
- Tell no one about the account and ensure the bank will not send you mailings or release account information to anyone but you. This is easily done and very common.
- Leave a packed bag with someone you trust in case you have to leave quickly. Don't forget money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents, extra medication, clothes, toiletries and essential supplies for your children.
- Take or photocopy all important documents (restraining order, birth certificates, visas or passports, divorce papers, custody orders, social insurance cards, driver's license, bank book, lease, deed or rental agreement). Keep important documents in a safe place for easy access in a crisis.
- Take something meaningful for your children: a favourite stuffed animal, toy, or book.
- Arrange for a safe place to go before you decide to leave.
- Keep a shelter and emergency numbers close at hand.
- Have change or a calling card for emergency calls.
- Contact Child Protection Services for help if necessary.

Review your safety plan often to ensure a quick and safe departure once you decide that it's time to leave

### Safety when you're on your own

- Change the locks on your doors and secure your windows.
- Make sure your children have a safety plan for when you are not with them.
- Inform school or daycare about who has permission to pick up your children.
- Inform your neighbours and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you.

### Safety with a restraining order

- Keep it with you at all times and give a copy to a family member, trusted friend or neighbour.
- Call the police if your abuser violates the order.
- Determine other ways to stay safe if the police do not respond immediately.
- Inform family, friends, neighbours and your physician that you have a restraining order
- Have friends, neighbours or landlord contact the police if they see your abuser near you home. They should provide the police with a description or picture of your abuser and the make, model and license number of his car.

Safety on the job and in public

- Decide who at work should know about your situation know about your situation (including security) and supply them with a photograph of your abuser, if necessary.
- Screen your telephone calls.
- Make sure you can leave work safely.
- If you drink and drive, park in a safe place.
- Ask some to escort you to your means of transportation.
- Use a variety of routes home, if possible.

<b>List of phone numbers important for your escape plan</b>
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Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Relative: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Crisis: \_\_\_\_\_

Lawyer: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Worker: \_\_\_\_\_

Women’s Shelter/Transition House: \_\_\_\_\_

Police: \_\_\_\_\_

Transportation # \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Important #: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_