

STRONG WOMEN HARD YARNS

Stories and tips
about domestic and family
violence

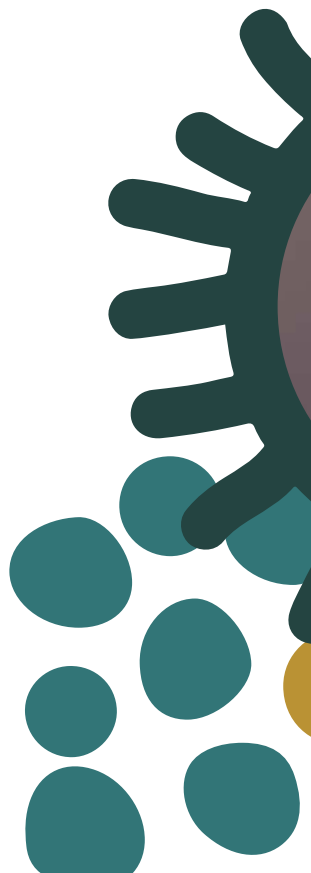


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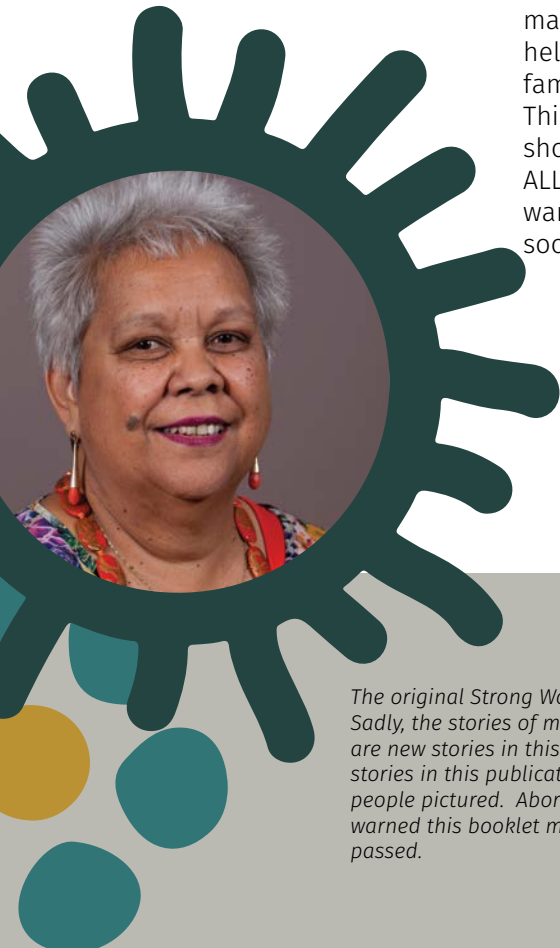
The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research receives defined term funding from the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women to undertake research and develop educational resources pertaining to domestic and family violence in Queensland.

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This helpful booklet captures real-life stories of women of all ages who have been abused by their partners or other family members. This kind of abuse is commonly referred to as domestic or family violence. Domestic and/ or family violence has harmful effects that are also shown in the stories of the women in this booklet. **Strong Women Hard Yarns** gives clear and factual definitions of different types of violence and names it for what it is.

I urge all women who read this, who may see themselves in the stories, to ask for help. There are organisations that provide services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as many other organisations, that can also help people affected by domestic and family violence to consider their options. This booklet is a valuable resource which should be shared widely to ensure that ALL types of violence are known about. We want people who need help to get it as soon as possible.



Jackie Huggins

Dr Jackie Huggins

The original Strong Women Hard Yarns booklet has been highly valued. Sadly, the stories of many of our women have not changed, and there are new stories in this edition to reflect other kinds of abuse. The stories in this publication are true, but they are not the stories of the people pictured. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are warned this booklet may contain images of women who have since passed.

Domestic and family violence can happen between men and women, men and men, women and women, adults and children and children and adults.

In domestic violence and family violence involving adults, women are more often the victims, and suffer more physical and psychological harm, than men.



Domestic and family violence is not the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander way.

Under Queensland's law, domestic and family violence is behaviour that is:

- physically or sexually abusive; or emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- economically abusive; or threatening; or coercive; or
- in any other way controls or dominates the other person in the relationship and causes them to fear for their safety or wellbeing or the safety and wellbeing of someone else.

Here are some options for children and men:

- Children can call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 and
- Men can call DVConnect Mensline on 1800 600 636.
- If there is immediate danger, anyone can call Emergency Services on 000.

**There is
no
excuse
for domestic,
family or
sexual
violence.**

FORMS OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

What is verbal abuse?

- Swearing, putting you down, making you feel bad.
- Threatening to harm you, your friends or family, or themselves.
- Being jealous of your family and friends and putting them down.

What is controlling behaviour?

- Not letting you hang around your family and/or friends.
- Checking up on you all the time to see where you are and who you're with.
- Checking and reading your text messages, emails, banking details (ATM slips), monitoring your social media page.

What is sexual abuse?

- Kissing or touching when you don't want to.
- Forcing you to have sex, with him or his mates.
- Forcing you to do other sexual stuff.

What is image-based abuse/technology facilitated abuse?

- When your sexual picture of you gets taken and shared without your consent or knowing about it.
- Cyberbullying is another way technology and electronic devices can threaten and harass you.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"I was told by him how to wear my hair and clothes, who I could and couldn't be friends with and what I could and couldn't say. The worst of the abuse was probably constantly being told I was nothing more than a "whinging, stupid bitch" and that I was "never going to be as pretty or sexy as other girls". He also forced me to have sex with him in public, at school, outdoors, as well as he forced me to perform sex acts on him that I never would have dreamt of doing. If he wasn't doing this, he'd constantly complain and spread rumours. He'd insult and make fun of me behind my back and I'd only find out from friends."

Is jealousy love?

Some people believe that if their boyfriend is jealous of them being with friends or family then it is a sign of love. While a little bit of jealousy sometimes in a relationship is normal, ongoing jealousy is controlling behaviour and can destroy your relationship.

jealousy controlling?

- Telling you how to do your hair or what clothes to wear.
- When they want you to spend all your time with them.
- When they make you feel bad for wanting to see family and friends.
- When they want you to give up work, study or things you enjoy so they can have you to themselves.
- When they are always accusing you of flirting when you're talking to your friends.
- When they tell you what you can and can't wear when you go out with friends.

Jealousy is not love – it's control and it's not healthy

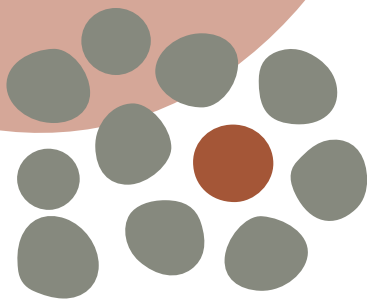
THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"I was seeing this guy I had known for a while. At first he seemed to be a great guy but then he started to change. He would get mad if I'd talk to my friends or jealous if I talked to other guys. Then it became worse. Towards the end, I didn't have any friends, hardly even left my house, didn't go to school or work and spent all my time with him. One night I went to the shop, without my phone, after he had left – I was gone about 10 minutes, and when I got home he had called three times. When I picked up the phone he started accusing me of cheating on him. I loved him so I thought I could change him. I realised I couldn't be with him anymore when he put a hole through my door and threatened to hurt me. In the end he refused to leave so I was forced to call the police."

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"But I don't want to hide my story, people need to know that it's not right for a man to sexually abuse you when he feels like it. He wasn't a stranger, but someone I trusted and loved, even my family thought he was the best thing. I was controlled, judged, dragged on the floor, spat on, tied up and beaten with a broomstick, and eventually stabbed with a large kitchen knife - all this in private. A few times I was that injured I would lay in bed crying for days. He didn't see why I needed to see a doctor, he only saw that I could be out of his sight. When it was over, I thought he would beg for forgiveness because of the hurt and pain he put me through, but this was all 'a normal way of living' he would always say. So, I thought there was no other way to survive this violence, without relying on him. I know that sounds silly, but at the time it gave me some hope. I was lucky, I got out of this relationship and was able to get some help from a local service."

Sometimes there is shame within our families but naming and stopping domestic violence and sexual violence should be everyone's business!



Some ideas on how you can help:

Q. You are at a party and notice that a young woman you know who has had too much to drink is leaving with someone she doesn't seem to know. What do you do?

A. Talk to her. Ask her if she knows the person she's with and offer to take her home or stay with her until she's able to leave safely.

Q. You are in a public place and notice a guy verbally or physically abusing his girlfriend. What do you do?

A. Keep a safe distance but draw attention to the incident by shouting out for him to stop. Tell them you are going to call the police.

THINGS TO DO AFTERWARDS:

- Support the person being abused – comfort them if they are upset, tell them they haven't done anything to deserve abuse. Encourage them to seek medical help or counselling if necessary.
- Encourage the person to tell someone – a youth counsellor, police, someone they trust.

What you do or say might make a difference to someone's life.



THIS IS WHAT I SAW...

"A girl a few years younger than me was at the pub and drunk. It was clear she wasn't thinking straight and likely to do something she'd regret. I took action and got her a glass of water, sat her down somewhere quiet and made sure she was all right to get home. A few men tried to approach her and made 'invitations', clearly trying to take advantage of her. I calmly told them she was in no state to make a rational decision or go home with anyone."

'If I were in this situation, would I want someone to help me?'

'I choose not to be a bystander.'





What is rape?

Rape is when someone has sexual intercourse, inserts a part of their body or an object inside you, or forces you to perform oral sex on them against your wishes.

What is sexual assault?

Sexual assault is any sexual act or behaviour without your consent. This includes touching, kissing, or forcing you to do sexual things you don't want to.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is when you fully understand what is going to happen and you agree to do it.

Consent is not freely given if you:

- Do not agree.
- Only agree because you are scared of being hurt.
- Are unconscious or asleep.
- Are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Are tricked into having sex with someone.

What can you do if you are raped or sexually assaulted?

- Go somewhere you feel safe.
- Get medical attention and/or report the assault to police.
- Find someone to talk to by calling the sexual assault helpline: 1800 010 120.



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"I started drinking alcohol around the time I turned fifteen, and it wasn't long after that I started having sex. Me and my mates would go to parties on the weekends and drink heaps, and sometimes I'd hook up with some guy I met at the party. Sometimes I sort of knew them beforehand, but other times I didn't. Lots of times my memory of the night would be sort of blurry. I've never been frightened, 'cos I've always been able to defend myself, but sometimes you feel... sometimes you just feel used. A lot of the time, especially with alcohol, you wake up the next day and you feel so degraded. It's just something you deal with cos if you sit and whinge about it, like if you stew on it and think about it, it just gets worse."

Physical abuse includes causing a person injury or threatening to do so. It includes:

- Slapping
- Punching
- Biting
- Kicking
- Strangling

Verbal abuse includes:

- Calling you names.
- Using bad language.
- Blaming you for everything that goes wrong.

Financial abuse includes:

- Controlling the money and not giving you enough for food and bills.
- Selling things that belong to you without your permission.
- Stopping you from having a job.

Sexual abuse includes:

- Pressuring you to have sex.
- Pressuring you to do other sexual stuff.
- Making you look at sexual pictures or movies.

Emotional/psychological abuse includes:

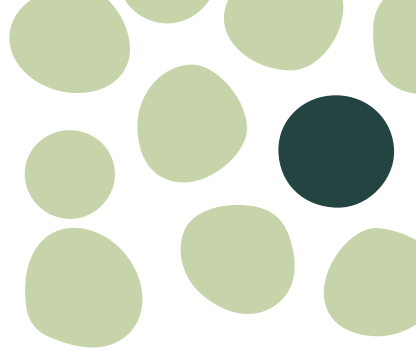
- Making you uncomfortable by sitting outside your home or work.
- Threatening not to give you the medication you need.
- Stopping you from being part of your cultural group.
- Taking away your confidence by always putting you down.



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

Coming from a small family, I would always hang out with my rellies, it was through this way where I met my man and we ended up living with his family away from my home. I thought it was going all good ways in the beginning, but after his Mum died, then he started to hurt me when his family weren't around. I was feeling confused and couldn't do anything right. Then one time when we were watching TV, he got real angry and came at me, threw me on the floor, putting both his hands around my throat, choking me. I remember trying to fight back, remember stamping my feet real hard ways on that floor, and thinking he's going to kill me. Then his Uncle came in and pulled him off and was yelling at him. Afterwards I remember saying to myself, I'm lucky to be alive. He was strangling me in my own home."

Choking, suffocation or strangulation in a domestic setting is a stand-alone offence in Queensland.



When children see or hear violence around them, they are at risk of:

- Causing trouble at school
- Becoming bullies
- Having trouble learning new things.

When children see or hear violence around them, they want:

- The violence to stop
- To feel safe
- To be cared for
- To know what's going to happen next in their lives

How you can make your children feel safe:

- Try to keep a routine for school, meal times, and bed times.
- Try to talk to your children about their day, their friends, how they feel.
- Help your children find good family role models – Uncles, Aunties, Cousins.
- Speak respectfully to your children and help them show respect toward others.
- Use positive and encouraging words with your children. Tell them you love them.

**THIS IS WHAT
HAPPENED TO ME...**

"When there was violence, I used to just get in the car and drive into the next town, just to get away, with the kids. I'd sleep in the car with the kids. Next morning I'd come back and get them ready for school and then go to work for eight hours standing up all day, tired out, then maybe it would happen again the next night and I'd have to go again."

The kids would be tired and cranky at school and I would often get calls from the teachers to tell me they were getting into trouble. I didn't want to involve my family – so I just handled it by myself. All those years, I just hated that man so much. I could have killed him. I wished him dead. I don't hate him anymore, but I'll never forget. The pain of all those years is still there in me, and the kids will always have those memories too."



"I've always been really sociable. I had never had to change who I am for anyone, until I met my younger husband - and all that changed, not straight away but over the years. He'd constantly put me down with his mean words, and I started to believe it was all my fault, he tried to stop but he just couldn't seem to change. How could I do something to help him become a better person? I'd heard similar stories from my friends and thought at that moment, 'I am not going to take this'. I told him something had to change in our relationship. Eventually he agreed, and we both went to talk to someone. It took time with a Counsellor, but with lots of work, and his change of ways, it felt like we were a team again. We make decisions together and communicate better."

What is a Domestic Violence Order (DVO)?

A DVO is an order made by the court that offers you and your children legal protection from the person using violence. DVOs are made at a Magistrates' Court.

Who can apply for a DVO?

- The victim of domestic or family violence (the aggrieved).
- Another person with the permission of the victim.
- A police officer who has investigated and found domestic or family violence (they can do this with or without the permission of the victim).

You can get help to fill in your application for a DVO from a domestic violence service.

You can have a DVO and still live in the same house together.

You can have a DVO on more than one person, for example, an abusive partner and members of his family.

People in these kinds of relationships can apply for DVOs:

INTIMATE PERSONAL:

includes current and former partners
- married, de-facto, parents of a child together, engaged or dating.

FAMILY:

a parent, uncle/aunt, brother/sister, adult child, in-laws (you do not have to be related by blood).

INFORMAL CARE RELATIONSHIP:

This is a relationship between two people if one of them needs the other to help them with daily living activities without being paid (such as dressing, making meals).

A DVO puts conditions on the behaviour of the person using the violence. It is not a criminal charge;

however, if the person commits violence again, or breaks the conditions of the DVO they may be charged with a breach of the DVO, which is a criminal offence. They may also be charged with another criminal offence if they commit assault, damage to property or other criminal behaviour.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"A turning point was when I went to TAFE to do a course. That was when I saw other people around me and none of them wore black eyes, I could see they weren't living the same lifestyle as me. They were all white people and they were all younger than me and they kind of had the world at their feet. Here was me coping with domestic violence, two kids and a drunk. I realised I didn't want my kids to be any man's punching bag, because that's exactly what I was. Then I started getting stronger in myself. I started to say I'd call the police and I'd have him charged - which I'd never done before. So I started empowering myself through TAFE and work and it got better and it wasn't so violent. We ended up going to talk to someone, I became more empowered and he stopped his violent ways with me and the kids. I started to learn my rights, because women have a right to be safe."

What does a respectful relationship look like?

When you're in a respectful, loving relationship:

- You don't have to do everything together because you feel secure in your relationship.
- You can share the decision making in a fair and equal way.
- You aren't afraid to be honest with each other.
- You can trust one another – going out with family and friends (male or female) is okay.
- You both can accept that there are good times in relationships and times when you need to respect differences in opinion and work on your relationship.
- You are able to talk about your thoughts and feelings honestly and openly.

Being in a respectful relationship makes you feel good about yourself.



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"I never finished high school. After my Mum passed away, someone had to be the woman of the house, take charge of things with my brothers and sisters. That person was me. But Aunties were around to help out when they could. So when I wanted to work in my community, I was told that I needed to do some study, and to prove that I could read and write. But during my class times and trying to learn, my boyfriend made it hard for me. It was like he was holding me back from doing something good with my life. After I tried to break up with him, he threatened to post my nude pictures online so he could sell them. When he was with his ex-partner she had said it was ok to do. But I never said he could do that with me.

All he wanted was the money for the pictures and to make me feel terrible about myself. I never wanted that sort of attention - how embarrassing and humiliating for me! What if my classmates saw these pictures? I could never go on studying if they knew about this. I was so scared about what could happen. Then I saw a flyer on the noticeboard for student support services and went to the Student Counsellor on campus. She helped me a lot. This was my first time talking to anyone about my story and in talking with her, I didn't feel as paranoid. After this I reported him to the Police."



WHAT IS ELDER ABUSE?

- Taking older people's property against their wishes.
- Threatening them verbally or physically to get what you want.
- Telling them you won't love them or come to see them if they don't share their pension with you.
- Stopping them from seeing family and friends.
- Not giving them enough food or proper care.
- Causing physical pain or injury.
- Sexual assault, abusive phone calls or watching obscene movies around them.

To find out more information about programs for older people, call the Queensland-wide Supporting Queensland Grandparents Information line on 1300 135 500 or Seniors Enquiry Line on 1300 135 500.

Grandparent Advisers help grandparents and non parent carers who provide ongoing care for children.
Phone 1800 245 965.

Is someone you know a victim of elder abuse? Here are some signs to look out for:

PHYSICAL ABUSE:

injury or bruises, rashes, hair loss, pain when being touched.

SEXUAL ABUSE:

fear, disturbed sleep, withdrawal, infections or difficulty walking.

FINANCIAL ABUSE:

unpaid bills, bank cards and/or personal belongings missing, unusual activity in bank accounts.

PSYCHOLOGICAL/EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

withdrawal, fearfulness, helplessness, acting nervous around certain people.

SOCIAL ABUSE:

sadness because of loneliness, withdrawal from friends, lack of confidence.

NEGLECT:

poor hygiene or personal care, health aids missing (dentures, hearing aids, glasses), weight loss, lack of variety in food, drink or social activity.



What are women's shelters like?

Women's shelters can be like share houses, self-contained units or separate units with shared space. Your local domestic violence service will know what type of shelter is available in your area so you will know what to expect.

Reasons why you might go to a shelter:

- To provide you with a place to stay where you and your children will be safe.
- To get some time out, to rest, to think about what you want to do next.
- To meet and talk to women who are dealing with similar problems to you.
- To get information to help you decide what is best for you and your children.
- To look at all of the options available to you if you leave, but also if you decide to stay.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"I had extended family living with me for eight years out of the ten years I was with him. It was good having family there, they would try to quieten him down, say 'Fightin's no good' ... that helped sometimes. But the most violent times happened when no one else was around. I don't think my family felt they could do anything about it. You had to have money and somewhere to go. Those things weren't available. I thought refuges and coppers were only for white people. That's how you grew up and that's what you seen and there was nowhere to go."

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"I always had a hard life, from the time I was a teenager 'til I got away from my husband. He used to beat me up all the time; he was always jealous, always accusing me of going off with other men. There were no services to help when I was young. I didn't know anything about domestic violence, or even that there were refuges you could go to keep you safe. I would have left a long time ago if I'd had somewhere to go. I've gotten really strong since I left my husband and started standing up for myself. Women have to be strong and not put up with violence, even if it means putting men in gaol. Men need to stop the violence too."

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...

"My daughter leaves me to look after her three kids all the time – she has a drinking problem and can't cope with them. I love them and don't mind doing it, but she still gets the money for having them so it makes it hard to stretch my pension to feed us all. I don't tell anyone because I don't want her to get in trouble with Centrelink, or for the kids to be taken away. Some weeks she comes around to get more money off me, for her and her man to take to the pub. Now my oldest grandson is starting to do the same. I worry who is going to look after them if anything happens to me."

How do I know if my friend is experiencing domestic violence and what can I do about it?

If your friend is in an abusive relationship you might notice the following signs:

- She is worried and nervous when her partner is around.
- She constantly makes excuses for his bad behaviour.
- When her partner's around she tries to keep the peace.
- She has unexplained bruises or injuries.
- She keeps getting texts and phone calls from her partner when she's away from him.
- She rarely contacts you, or her family.

There are many ways to support a friend who is experiencing domestic or family violence.

You can:

- Invite her to go to a safe place where you can talk.
- Tell her you're there for her if she needs you.
- Listen to her.
- Don't blame or judge her.
- Let her know the violence is not her fault.
- Keep what she tells you private.
- Ring DVConnect for advice.
- Put safety first –your friend, her children and your own.

DVConnect 1800 811 811
– to help keep your friend safe

Thank you to the reviewers of this edition of Strong Women Hard Yarns.



Auntie Bino Toby is the Case Management Practice Manager and Cultural Advice Manager at Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFVLS). QIFVLS provides free legal advice and culturally appropriate support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities experiencing family violence and sexual assault. QIFVLS provides a state-wide service, and has a number of offices in Queensland. Auntie Bino is based Rockhampton.

You can learn more about QIFVLS [here](#).



Auntie Lyn Anderson is CEO at Helem Yumba Healing Place, Rockhampton. Helem Yumba Healing Place provides Counselling and Women's and Men's Business in a range of therapeutic supports for their clients and families. The service aims at addressing violence and trauma with a view to facilitate harmonious ways of living. You can learn more about Helem Yumba [here](#).



Jamie Anderson is an Aboriginal social worker who identifies with the Gangulu Wuli-Wuli/Kanolu clan groups from Central Queensland. She possesses knowledge in social work processes and interventions, decolonisation and cultural supervision; with direct field practice and experience in youth, family violence within the local Aboriginal rural, remote and broader community sector. Jamie has engaged in collaborative research projects, and activism in sector development. Jamie holds positions on several Committees within her local community and is CQUniversity QCDFVR Project Officer.

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There are organisations that provide services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as many other organisations,

- Domestic and/or family violence counselling and support;
- Legal assistance and support; and
- Health care and health related programs.

Contact details for these services can be found www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/support-victims-abuse/domestic-family-violence

Or by calling DVConnect's 24 hour Womensline on: 1800 811 811 or visit www.dvconnect.org