

# When Lockdown and Isolation Become Dangerous: Domestic Violence

Coping with the coronavirus crisis involves a lengthy stay at home and a rise in the levels of stress and anxiety. In light of this stressful atmosphere, it is natural for the amount of fighting to increase among family members. But when these fights get out of control, people get hurt. Domestic violence can worsen during these times; how can you recognize that you're in a violent relationship and what can you do about it?



## Is it violence?

Arguments within the family and expressions of anger are rather common and are an essential part of any relationship. As long as you respect and worry about the other side, this is a healthy and normal way to deal with and solve problems. During stressful periods, and during the intense stay at home with the kids, you might argue even more than usual- about money, the kids, the distribution of house chores and more. The kids might also fight among themselves more. As long as the arguments take place without anyone getting hurt, it isn't violence.

When arguments get out of control, and one of the sides gets hurt, physically or emotionally, then it's violence. Contrary to popular belief, domestic violence doesn't have to include physical harm- it can also take place with words or actions. If the relationship includes an abuse of power to hurt, socially isolate or bully; if one of the sides is scared that this may happen again - this is violence.

It's often hard to think about what's happening in your home as "domestic violence". Many people in abusive relationships diminish what's happening, ignore it or even deny it. The abusers might diminish the significance of their behavior, and those being abused tend to believe that they are at fault or feel like they're just exaggerating. Because of the difficulty to accept the fact that what's going on is violence or abuse, it's also hard for people to talk about it, even with those closest to them.

It's important to remember that domestic violence can take place in all kinds of families (single parents, same-sex, mixed, etc.). It can happen between couples, between parents and their children and between siblings. People of every gender, sector and social status can behave violently or be abusive. Violence or abuse are not part of relationships, and there is no good excuse for using force or threats.

## Why does it happen?

Many people still don't understand why some people purposely hurt others, especially those they love. Domestic violence can happen for a number of reasons. Some abusers have a general tendency to exercise authority and control on others, thinking that they deserve to get what they want more than anyone else. Others have a difficult time dealing with their feelings and with stress or tension, and they take their frustration and anger out on the members of their family. There are people who were raised in families where they were exposed to abuse or violence as a way to deal with disagreements and don't know how to behave differently. Sometimes violence stems from jealousy and the will to control the person's partner. Some can feel like their partner "belongs to them" and therefore they have the right to threaten them as they please.

## The affect violence has on a family

When domestic violence takes place, even if it's just between the adults, it affects everyone. Children learn about relationships and dealing with disagreements from their parents. When they're exposed to violence at home, they might find themselves in abusive relationships as adults. The damage violence causes can also start showing in early stages, and in all areas of life; violence damages the physical and mental health of all the family members, the children's development, the family member's ability to function in society and in other relationships.

## What can we do?

It's important to understand that violence doesn't disappear on its own, and even tends to get worse over time if not treated seriously. During these times of extended periods at home, violence can worsen. It is critical to treat it and deal with it so as not to put you and your family members at risk.

If you feel like you're a danger to your family - leave the house until you calm down.

If you feel like you or your child are in immediate danger, leave the house and call the police or the 118 hotline.

If you aren't sure that you're experiencing domestic violence, or feel the need to talk but are afraid, you should turn to the Ministry of Social Services' centers for support and treatment for victims of domestic violence. These centers can help you and your family escape the crisis and distress, stop the abuse and empower your ability to cope on your own.