

ADDITIONAL FORMS OF ABUSE UNIQUE TO LESBIAN RELATIONSHIPS

These are abuses that arise as a direct result of the heterosexist and homophobic nature of society. Partners who abuse often use homophobia and heterosexism as a weapon of control over their partner in a variety of ways;

- ◆ By 'outing' or threatening to out their partner, to friends, family, employer, police, church or others in the wider community.
- ◆ By telling a partner that no one will help her because the police and the justice system are homophobic.
- ◆ By telling a partner that she will not be believed because lesbians do not rape or abuse their lovers.
- ◆ By telling a partner that she deserves it because she is lesbian. This type of abuse is indicative of internalised homophobia or self-hatred by an abuser.
- ◆ By telling a partner that she is not a 'real' lesbian because she used to relate to men, has male friends, is a 'breeder', or prefers certain sexual practices or behaviours.
- ◆ Because of the pervasiveness of heterosexism, an abuser may attempt to convince a partner that the abusive behaviour is normal and that the abused partner does not understand lesbian relationships.
- ◆ Abusers can also rely on heterosexist and sexist stereotypes to hide or increase power and control over their partner by portraying the violence as mutual or consensual combat.

Bill of Rights

- ◆ I have the right to feel safe
- ◆ I have the right to a violence free environment and lifestyle
- ◆ I have the right to equality
- ◆ I have the right to respect
- ◆ I have a right to be appreciated
- ◆ I have a right to my dignity
- ◆ I have a right to make choices
- ◆ I have a right to receive empathy and warmth
- ◆ I have a right to be accepted as I am
- ◆ I have a right to say no

NQDVRS

Funded by the Department of Communities

- Information and referral
- Aardvarc program for children
- Community education & training
- Resources
- Court Support
- Men's Behavioral Change Program

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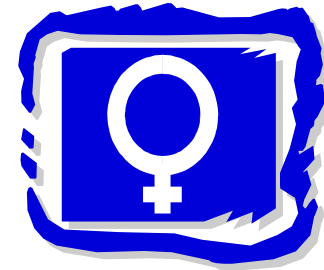
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Against Violence # 24

***INFORMATION FOR
WOMEN IN A
LESBIAN
RELATIONSHIP***



North Queensland Domestic
Violence Resource Service

“There are days when I feel so alone, and then the memories of the abusive relationship with Lori* flood into my mind, and I start to fear for my life. It’s created a big scar in my life. Every time I feel the scar, it is a reminder of what happened.”
Julie O’Donnell (*names changed by request)*

WHAT IS SAME SEX DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence in all intimate relationships is essentially about power and control, irrespective of the label attached to describe the relationship. Domestic violence, whether heterosexual or homosexual, is nothing less than the regular exercise of wrongful power and forcible control by one partner over another. Lesbian battering has been defined by Hart in *Naming the Violence*, as "that pattern of violent and coercive behaviours whereby a lesbian seeks to control the thoughts, beliefs, or conduct of her intimate partner or to punish the intimate partner for resisting the perpetrator's control over her." Forms that domestic violence may take in all intimate relationships include;

Physical; hitting, punching slapping, pushing.....
Sexual; rape, indecent behaviour without consent,

Verbal; put downs, name calling, mind games

Financial; withholding access to money, not allowing you to earn your own money.....

Social; isolation from friends and family....

Domestic violence does not only encompass personal attacks, but can include damage to property and attacks on others or pets.

WHY NOT JUST LEAVE?

Nobody seems to understand why victims stay with the women who batter them. A short list of some common reasons for staying may help you here.

- The victims love their batterers.
- Victims do not want to leave the women they love; they only want the violence to stop.
- Victims hope and believe, often for a long time, that the violence will stop.
- The violence is periodic, and the loving periods between violent episodes entice the victims to stay.
- Victims may believe they provoke or cause or deserve the violence.
- Victims may be told by others that they provoke or cause or deserve the violence.
- Victims may have tried to leave and been beaten for it.
- Victims may believe it isn't really violence when a same sex couple fight, it is a fight between equals.
- Victims are threatened with more violence, or even death, if they try to leave, and, with good reason, they believe these threats.
- Victims may have left before & not been able to access help & support & believe they have nowhere to go.

Don't be a victim of domestic violence any longer! Become a survivor and heal your life.

Another issue for lesbians is the small world syndrome - Many lesbian communities are rather small & closed, with "everybody knowing everybody & everybody else's business". A woman leaving an abusive relationship may find herself constantly running into her ex-partner at lesbian bars, women's bookstores, friend's houses, dances etc.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION ORDERS

In 1999, the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989, was amended to include same sex couples under the definition of spouse. This means that lesbian women can now have some protection from their violent spouse or ex-spouse. A Protection Order is a Civil Court order made by a Magistrate that restricts the way that a person can behave towards another person. There is no criminal charge made against the person unless they breach the Order, so there is no criminal record.

The person who the order is made against (the Respondent), can be restrained from contacting or communicating with the victim, or going to the home or workplace of the victim. You can have a Protection Order and still live together. For more information on Protection Orders, contact NQDVRS, the Police or the Magistrates court.

**You have the right to be safe.
Violence is unacceptable.**