

# Domestic Violence and Coercive Control

Sadly, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased cases of domestic violence and coercive control. During the months of March –December 2020, Gardaí reported a 25% increase in domestic violence calls compared to the same time last year. The national support service Women's Aid saw a 43% rise in cases from March – December 2020 when compared with the same timeframe in previous years.

Domestic abuse and coercive control take place in the shadows, behind closed doors. By raising awareness and helping each other let's try to bring it out to the light.

Everyone has arguments, and everyone disagrees with their partners, family members and others close to them from time to time. But if this begins to form a consistent pattern and you feel afraid of your partner, then this is a sign of domestic abuse. You may feel like you have no power over your life and that you are being controlled by your partner.

## What is Domestic Abuse / Violence?

Domestic violence is where one person uses abuse to control and assert power over their partner in an intimate relationship. It can be physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or financial abuse. Anyone can be affected, and it can happen in any home.

There may be warning signs that your relationship is abusive. We have listed some warning signs below to help you make sense of your situation. You do not need to experience several warning signs for your relationship to be abusive.

- You are afraid of your partner.
- You are constantly 'walking on eggshells' because of his/her mood swings.
- You spend your time working out what kind of mood he/she is in and the focus is always on his needs.
- He/she loses his temper easily and over minor things.
- He/she has hit you or almost hit you and/or your children.
- He/she is jealous and accuses you of flirting and having affairs.
- He/she has forced you to do something that you really did not want to do.



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- He/she has forced you to have sex with him/her or with other people. He/she has made you participate in sexual activities that you were uncomfortable with.
- He/she has threatened to kill you, or to kill himself/herself if you leave him/her.

## What is Coercive Control?

Coercive control is a persistent pattern of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour including all or some forms of domestic abuse (emotional, physical, financial, sexual including threats) by a partner, husband/wife or ex. It traps women/men in a relationship and makes it impossible or dangerous to leave.

Answering yes to any of the below statements may help you recognise signs of coercive control.

- Does he/she criticise your family and friends and do you feel like you are being isolated from your friends and family?
- Do you think he/she is monitoring your online activity, or has installed spyware on your phone, laptop or any other device?
- Does he/she take control over aspects of your everyday life, such as where you can go, what you wear, when to be home and when you can sleep?

- Is he/she repeatedly putting you down such as telling you that you're worthless?
- Is he/she in control of the finances and prevents you from having your own money?
- Does he/she threaten to reveal or publish private information about you, like private photos or videos online?

If after reading this you think that you are, or might be, living in an abusive or controlled relationship, further help and information can be found here:

[www.womensaid.ie/help/](http://www.womensaid.ie/help/)

[www.mensaid.ie/our-services/](http://www.mensaid.ie/our-services/)

[mnafeasa.com/index.php/services/](http://mnafeasa.com/index.php/services/)

If you have children and are worried about their safety, click here. [www.womensaid.ie/help/domesticviolence/children.html](http://www.womensaid.ie/help/domesticviolence/children.html)

Please remember you are not alone. Reach out to someone who can help and who you trust. You can speak to your Team Leader / Manager / Occupational Health / Mental Health First Responder. The **24/7 Mental Wellness Programme** is available 24/7 on FreePhone 1800 911 909.

