



Something not right at home?

## BURSTING THE BUBBLE

### Have you ever felt like this?

'I used to think my family was so different to everyone else's. All my friends' families seemed so nice. But being around my family just stressed me out. Lots of times I just didn't want to go home.'



If there's something happening at home that makes you feel

- ★ confused
- ★ worried
- ★ uncomfortable
- ★ afraid

or if something is being kept a secret,  
then you are not alone.

And there are things that you can do about it.

This booklet helps you  
work out what is going on and how you can BURST the BUBBLE.

# WHAT FAMILIES SHOULD BE LIKE ...

Families come in all shapes and sizes and few look much like the *Brady Bunch* or the nice families on *Neighbours*. In reality, most families have stresses and arguments....



Even though things in families can get stressful at times, you should always be able to count on your parents and other family members to

- ★ care about you
- ★ look after you
- ★ try to help with problems
- ★ listen to you
- ★ never hurt you
- ★ never hurt each other.

*is your family like this?*

# SOS QUIZ

This quiz helps you to work out what you are feeling about your family and whether there are **warning signs** that something's not right at home.

Statement	Always	Sometimes	Never
I feel relaxed when I am around my family.			
My parents look after me.			
I worry about how one member of my family treats another.			
My parents care about me.			
I feel nervous or scared around certain members of my family.			
I trust people in my family not to hurt me.			
Everyone in my family is treated like they are important.			
I worry that one member of my family might hurt another.			
My parents treat each other with respect.			

If you circled any **alarm bells** () , it sounds like you don't always feel ok around your family.

While things might be happy sometimes, maybe at other times people don't treat you or other family members as they should.



# ABUSE BETWEEN PARENTS

*'Mum's boyfriend treats her like he owns her and she has to do what he says or else.'*

Abuse is when one parent tries to hurt, control or bully the other parent. This is also called **domestic violence**.

It can take many forms, like when one parent

- ★ stops the other from seeing their friends or family, or from having a job
- ★ constantly checks up on or stalks them
- ★ yells at them, puts them down or makes them feel stupid or bad
- ★ takes control of the money in the household, and doesn't share it
- ★ scares or injures the other parent by hitting them, throwing things or threatening to hurt them
- ★ makes the other parent do sexual things that they don't want to do.

**Seeing one parent treat the other badly can really affect you. If one parent is abusing the other, they are also abusing you. They are not making your home a safe or happy place to be.**

# ABUSING YOUNG PEOPLE

Abuse is when parents or other family members do things that hurt you, scare you or make you feel bad about yourself.

**Emotional abuse** is when a parent or family member constantly puts you down or makes you feel like they don't want you or don't care about you.

*'It feels like I'm not important. She says I'm stupid and I'm always in the way, she wishes she never had me.'*

**Neglect** is when a parent doesn't look after your basic needs (like providing food, clothes, a safe home and medical attention).

*'When mum was off her face I'd have to feed and take care of myself even when I was a little kid. I used to stay at home a lot to look after her.'*

**Physical abuse** is when a family member hits, bashes, or physically injures you, or threatens to hurt you.

*'He used to kick or hit me if I didn't do what I was told.'*





**Sexual abuse** is when someone makes you do sexual things. They might trick you, pressure you, scare you, confuse you or threaten you so that you feel like you have to do these things.

*'My father used to touch me in a horrible way when mum was at work at night. He told me that mum would kick me out if she found out.'*

## THERE'S NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSING ANOTHER PERSON

### Keep in mind that

- **No one ever deserves to be abused.** The blame for the abuse lies with the person who's doing it. They don't have to act this way. It's their choice.
- **Any form of abuse is wrong.** Physical and sexual abuse, and threats to hurt another person, are also against the law.

# HOW IS THIS AFFECTING ME?

Being abused or watching other family members being abused can be painful and confusing.

Here's what other people said about how abuse affected them.

- ★ 'I'm nervous all the time.'
- ★ 'I feel like it's my fault.'
- ★ 'I get angry at everyone.'
- ★ 'I get depressed like I can't be bothered with anything.'
- ★ 'I don't know what to do, I feel helpless.'
- ★ 'Sometimes I feel like I want to hurt myself.'
- ★ 'I just want to tune out and forget it. Sometimes I get pissed or stoned, but that only blocks it out for a while.'
- ★ 'I don't know what to think about Mum. I love her but I just want her to stop hurting me!'

Maybe you've felt like this or maybe you've had different reactions. There's no right or wrong way to feel.

# DEALING WITH FEELINGS

You've probably already worked out a few ways of dealing with your feelings. Here are some more ideas.

- ★ Talk to someone about how you feel.
- ★ Write your feelings down in a journal.
- ★ Do drawings or art.
- ★ Listen to music or write your own song.
- ★ Go to a place you like.
- ★ Play sport, or go for a walk or bike ride.



*'The way I coped with the sexual abuse taught me a lot about myself. It's made me a lot stronger, and through this very difficult time I've discovered the real me. I've learned to appreciate life more .... abuse never goes away, you just learn to deal with it and accept what has happened ...'* - Lauren

*'Drugs are not the answer. Improve yourself, don't make it worse. From my experience I have found that the drugs don't work.'* - Krystal

(These quotes from Lauren & Krystal, from *A Guide for Young Women about Sexual Assault*, Northern Centre Against Sexual Assault, 2002)

# GETTING SAFE

It's very important to think about ways to protect yourself from abuse, or from seeing abuse between other family members.

## If things get dangerous

and you're worried about you or someone else getting hurt

- ✓ call the police for help on 000
- ✓ go somewhere safe
- ✓ call someone who can help you to get safe like a family friend, a relative, Child Protection service, or the police.



## What other people have done when they felt scared or threatened

- ★ 'I'd just get up and go to my grandma's.'
- ★ 'I ended up telling some friends about the bad fights in my family, and I crashed at their places a lot.'
- ★ 'I've called the coppers when it gets bad.'
- ★ 'I used to get my little sister and hide in my room.'



# MAKE UP YOUR OWN SAFETY ACTION PLAN

Somewhere safe I can go when things get scary is: \_\_\_\_\_

A person I trust who could help if  
I'm in a situation that scares me is: \_\_\_\_\_

Their phone number is: \_\_\_\_\_

Our code word is: \_\_\_\_\_

When I use this code  
word this person should:

- call the police for me
- tell a trusted adult or ring a help-line
- Meet me somewhere that we've agreed on.

This place is \_\_\_\_\_

From now on I'll make sure I have  
enough money in my pocket to:

- make a phone call from a public phone
- buy a bus ticket
- catch a taxi



**Tell someone what's going on.**

It can be a bit scary, but telling someone can help  
get safer and make you feel less alone.

*It takes a while to find the right person to tell but keep trying 'cos  
you feel a lot better if you don't have to deal with it on your own.'*

# TELLING SOMEONE FAQs

**Who should I tell about the abuse and what will they do?** You could talk to a friend, a family member (if they're not the one doing the abusing), friends' parents, family friends, teachers, counsellors, doctors or any other adult you trust. They can give you support and/or help you to get to a safe place.

*They shouldn't judge or criticise you.*

**Will professionals keep what I tell them private?** They have to keep what you say private except if they think you or someone else is in danger. In this case they may be required by law to tell this to the government Child Protection Service. If you are worried about this, you could

- ★ ask them first, 'what does your service do?' or 'will you keep any info I tell you private? If not, what will you do with any info I tell you?'
- ★ telephone or email a help-line where you do not have to give your name (see *Services that can help*, listed later).

**What if I tell the Child Protection Service, or what if someone else tells them?** They'll investigate what's happening to see if you're safe in your family and if there's anything that should be done to protect you. There are a number of things they can do, like taking action against the abuser or finding a safe place for you to stay. For more info, see *FAQS page* on the web site

[www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com)

# TRUE STORIES NO.1



My name's Vu. My stepfather has abused me, my sister and my mother. I remember a long time back when I was only a little kid hiding in my room from all the yelling. I heard a very loud scream and raced to the kitchen where the noise was coming from and saw my stepdad with his hands around my mother's throat throwing punches at her. I tried to stop him but got a bowl of food thrown at me. I remember being dragged outside by my t-shirt and locked in the shed by myself for hours. Many years have passed since then, and while I can't say the situation has changed, I certainly have. I'm no longer that little boy who couldn't defend himself. What's got me through is the love of my mother and sister and other people who guided me and helped me find the strength to stand up for myself and, ultimately, to walk away from the situation.



## TRUE STORIES NO.2



My name's Tiffany. My dad calls me 'stupid' and takes his anger out on me on a regular basis. He's a big, loud and intimidating person, and he controls both me and my mother with constant criticism and manipulation. He's extremely intelligent and has a way of making it seem as if I am imagining things if I feel abused. I've coped with his abuse by always trying to please him, being the best at everything I do. But it never really works. I've learnt that for the abusive person, your best is *never* good enough. Some time ago I started to read books about abuse. I used to be really suicidal, blaming myself for any faults I may have, that make him so angry. But through my reading I've learnt to believe in myself, to stand up for myself and stop taking responsibility for his anger and insults. If you feel that something is not right about the way someone you love is treating you, my advice is to trust your feelings (even if no one else does) and *never* accept blame for their abuse.

For more stories, see [www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com)

# SERVICES THAT CAN HELP

**Action Centre** – provides general and sexual assault counselling, referrals and medical services for young people. Phone (03) 9654 4766 or 1800 013 952 or visit [www.fpv.org.au](http://www.fpv.org.au)

**Australian Childhood Foundation** - counselling for children and young people affected by abuse. Phone (03) 9874 3922

**Centres Against Sexual Assault** – support and info if you've been sexually abused. To find the centre nearest you see [www.casa.org.au](http://www.casa.org.au) or phone (03) 9344-2210 or 1800 806 292 (24 hrs)

**Child Protection** – government service responsible for protecting young people and children from abuse, and for investigating reports of abuse. Visit [www.dhs.vic.gov.au](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au) and click 'Child Protection'. Phone 131 278

**Kids Help Line** - telephone, email and online counselling for young people. Phone 1800 551 800 or visit [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

**Melbourne Youth Support Service at Frontyard** – info on housing options. Phone (03) 9614 3688 or visit [www.frontyard.org](http://www.frontyard.org)

**Youth Law** – info on your rights and free legal advice. Phone (03) 9611 2412 or visit [www.youthlaw.asn.au](http://www.youthlaw.asn.au)

## Services to help your parents:

**Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service** - provides info and support to abused migrant women. Phone (03) 9898 3145

**Relationships Australia** - support groups & counselling for abusive and abused partners. Phone (03) 9261 8700 or visit [www.relationships.com.au](http://www.relationships.com.au)

**Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service** - info, support & access to safe housing for women and their children. Phone (03) 9373 0123 or 1800 015 188 (24 hours)

**Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency** - family support to keep indigenous children & young people safe at home (metro area only). Phone (03) 9471 1855 or visit [www.vacca.org](http://www.vacca.org).

# BURSTING THE BUBBLE

This booklet is based on the  
Bursting the Bubble website

[www.burstingthebubble.com](http://www.burstingthebubble.com)

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Domestic Violence &  
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