

He loves me,
he loves me not...



RECOVERING FROM FAMILY VIOLENCE

by 'Emily'
and the
Domestic Violence
and Incest Resource Centre

PREFACE

The first part of this book makes for difficult reading. It is a story about how relationships can go wrong when one person in a family decides to use violence against other family members in an attempt to control them. Emily spent several years trying to remove her children from the grasp of such a man. In doing so, she sought assistance from a number of people (whom she calls 'the professionals') and organisations in the community and legal sectors. However Emily found that informing others of what was happening in her family, and even her son's disclosure of the sexual abuse he was suffering on contact visits, made little change to the situation. How can we understand what seemed, to Emily, to be a reluctance to take action to protect a vulnerable young child?

The second part of the book seeks to answer this question. In it, we explore some of the matters that lie behind and influence the way various systems respond to a disclosure of violence in a family. This section contains in-depth information about:

- the different forms that family violence takes;
- why it is that women often stay, at least initially, in violent relationships;
- the effects on children of witnessing violence;
- the effects of child sexual assault;
- the Child Protection system;
- mandatory reporting and medical practitioners; and
- dealing with violence through the legal system.

Altogether, this book provides people who work with those who experience family violence with the tools needed to understand how best to work with systems that have been set up to respond to this form of violence. It will enhance the ability to advocate for those who are victimised by family violence, and is especially valuable to people who are new to working in, and learning about, this area of expertise. In addition, it will enable other women who are, or have been, victims of abuse in their homes to learn from Emily's experiences and, in recovering from violence, move into a world of other possibilities.

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This book is about how lives can be turned upside down when one person in a family uses violence against other family members. 'Emily' spent several years trying to remove herself and her children from the grasp of a man who abused them. During that time she sought assistance from a number of people and organisations, but found that telling them about the abuse made little difference.

How are we to understand the failure of legal, welfare and medical services to protect the victims of family violence? What lies behind the way professional people respond to a disclosure of domestic violence or child sexual abuse? This book deals with these thorny issues. It provides in-depth information about the different forms family violence can take; why it is that women may stay in such relationships; how children are affected by witnessing domestic violence; child sexual assault; the Child Protection system; mandatory reporting of child abuse by medical practitioners; and, crucially, the legal system.

The book traces the different and complex pathways along which women and children pass as they escape from family violence. It is essential reading for students, for professionals who come into contact with victims of family violence, and for the general reader who wishes to learn more about its dynamics.



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