



TIP SHEET 10

How do we make our churches safer?

It starts up the front.

- **With teaching**

In our churches we need to teach carefully and sensitively around issues of family and domestic violence. Consider how the Bible's teaching on anger, rage, habitual sin, repentance, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, oppression and power related to abuse. Refer to Tip Sheet 1.

- **By explicitly rejecting the misuse of scripture.**

We need to be clear and direct in opposing the use of the Bible to manipulate, control, demean or demand and punish. When we teach on issues of gender, marriage and divorce we need to consider how the Bible may be misused in the domestic violence context or misheard by people experiencing violence.

- **Leaders and elders need to be trained in responding to domestic violence.**

Are your leaders aware of what to do if they suspect domestic violence is occurring? Do you have a domestic abuse policy in your church? Appoint an appropriate woman in your church to offer specific pastoral support for people who disclose abuse. Be alert to the possibility that leaders have been groomed by the person using violence. Refer to Tip Sheet 3.

- **Acknowledge domestic violence happens in churches too.**

Make it clear to your congregation to seek support when they are experiencing violence. People need to trust that leaders will listen well and believe their disclosure. Print the BTS Domestic Violence tip sheets and have them available at church. Post relevant Breaking the Silence posters or the tip sheets up around church, including in bathrooms. Pray about domestic violence at church meetings.

- **Value and promote the role of women up front.**

Let your value of women be visible at church through what you say and what you model. Do women have a meaningful pathway to voice concerns and contribute at church?

It involves actions not just words.

- **The three 'R's - Recognise, Respond, Refer.**

We need to be churches where our actions reflect the gospel. When we see or hear concerning behaviour we need to be trusted to respond. Refer to Tip Sheets 3 – 7 for more information on responding.

- **Speak up when you notice harmful or disrespectful behaviour.**



Asking the hard questions can communicate aggressive or disrespectful behaviour is not OKAY.

If you decide to speak up, be respectful and appropriate:

- Speaking to the person affected by violence “Are you afraid at home?”
- Speaking to the person using violence “How do you think your partner felt when you ...”

- **Educate and train your church members in understanding domestic violence, how to respond and how to get help.**

Domestic and family abuse is complex. Encourage your church to complete the Breaking the Silence training and to know what to do when they are concerned about violence in their home or someone they know. Contact the CPU regarding domestic violence resources for your church.

- **Support and encourage those that make the choice to leave to seek safety.**

Welcome the single parent, the divorced parent. Support them with practical love and care. Ask how church can best support them.

- **Build a relationship with your local refuge and provide practical support.**

Strengthen ties with local support services, assist them and learn from them. Make your support for those experiencing violence in our community be in action not just word.

Foster relationships and community.

- **Life together.**

Family violence is preventable. We need to create a culture where violence, aggression and disrespect is not condoned but spoken against. What can we do to make people feel safe to speak up when something is not right? Do we have structures in place to foster community and supporting one another? E.g. small groups, pastoral care.

- **Care for those at risk.**

Consider how to actively care for people who are at risk of or are experiencing family violence. How can we create a safe and loving community where people are supported and can heal? This might include having a pastoral care team care for the family.

Safer churches know where to get help.

- **In our denomination:** Contact the Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU) for assistance.
- **Locally:** Know the professional counsellors, behavioural change services, women’s services, or women’s refuge in your area.
- **Online:** Know where to get help online, such as 1800RESPECT, Kids Helpline, NSW Domestic Violence Line, and the Domestic Violence Legal Advice Line.



2023 EDITION

BREAKING THE SILENCE

DOMESTIC & FAMILY
VIOLENCE TIP SHEET **10**

RESOURCES

Conduct Protocol Unit, Presbyterian Church of Australia (NSW, ACT, WA, TAS)

Phone: [02 9690 9325](tel:0296909325) | Email: cpu@pcnsw.org.au | Website: breakingthesilence.org.au

Presbyterian Counselling Service

Jericho Road, Presbyterian Church of NSW

Phone: [1800 818 133](tel:1800818133) | Email: counselling@jerichoroad.org.au | Website: jerichoroad.org.au/counselling

SUPPORT SERVICES

1800 RESPECT - National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service

24/7 support, information and referral for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence or abuse

Ph: [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732)

NSW Child Protection Helpline

24/7 helpline for reporting concerns for the safety of children and young people.

Ph: [132 111](tel:132111)

Web: reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s

NSW Domestic Violence Line

24/7 information, support and referrals for women experiencing violence.

Ph: [1800 656 463](tel:1800656463)

Web: domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/get-help

No to Violence: Men's referral service

Advice for men about family violence

Ph: [1300 766 491](tel:1300766491)

Mensline

For men experiencing violence in a relationship

Ph: [1300 789 978](tel:1300789978)

Web: <https://mensline.org.au/>

FURTHER RESOURCES

Breaking the Silence Foundations Training

Professional Standards Unit, **Sydney Anglican Policy on Responding to Domestic Abuse**. Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney, 2018, Online: safeministry.org.au/domestic-family-abuse.

State Library of NSW, **Hot Topics: Domestic Violence**, Issue 87,2013, Legal Information Access Centre, Online: legalanswers.sl.nsw.gov.au/hot-topics-domestic-violence

Smith, C. **God's Good Design: What the Bible really says about Men and Women**. Matthias Media. 2012.

Holcomb, J.S. Holcomb, L.A. **Is it my fault? Hope and healing for those suffering domestic violence**. Moody Publishers. 2014.