



What is coercive control?

Coercive control is any abusive behaviours towards a current or former partner with the intention to coerce or control them. There is usually a pattern of repeated behaviours. These behaviours, if occurring as isolated incidents may appear insignificant on their own, can accumulate to cause significant harm. They include actions that instill fear, isolate, humiliate, or restrict their partners' freedom. While physical and sexual abuse can be part of coercive control, they are not necessary for coercive control to be present. The strategies used are often particular to the victim, but there is a common pattern of controlling behaviour.

COERCIVE CONTROL IS A RECOGNISED FORM OF DOMESTIC ABUSE AND A CRIMINAL ACT IN NSW SINCE 1 JULY 2024. BEHAVIOURS PRESENT IN COERCIVE CONTROL MAY INCLUDE:

- **Isolating from friends and family** – Trying to get their partner to reduce or cut contact with their support network. Insisting they accompany the partner whenever they spend time with their friends or family.
- **Sexual abuse** – making rules or demands when their partner must have sex with them or perform certain activities, taking photos or videos without their consent.
- **Making all the decisions** – making rules about what their partner must do and threatening punishment if they break the rules. Ignoring their partner's preferences or saying they 'know best'.
- **Limiting freedom or controlling choices** - Preventing their partner from pursuing hobbies or attending work with the goal of isolating the partner. They may restrict access to a car or public transport, hide their partners devices or change passwords for social media or banking apps. Telling their partner what they can and can't wear, making passive or aggressive comments about how they look, what they eat or how often they exercise.
- **Monitoring or stalking** – Excessive texts or calls when away or reading messages or emails without their partner's permission. Stalking or using tracking technology to monitor their partner's movements.



- **Emotional abuse** – Put-downs, shaming, belittling and humiliating, making them doubt the abuse by gaslighting their partner. Using tactics that pressure or punish the partner. Stonewalling their partner or giving them the silent treatment as a form of punishment until their demands are met or as a consequence of unmet expectations.
- **Verbal abuse** – calling their partner names, putting them down or criticising how they do things and bullying under the guise of a “joke”.
- **Financial abuse** – Withholding or limiting access to money, dictating what it can be used for or spent on. Limiting financial independence including restricting a partner from earning their own money and working outside of the home.
- **Animal abuse** – Exploiting the attachment a partner has with a pet to intimidate or control by threatening to hurt or kill the pet, letting it out of the house, selling or giving away the pet.
- **Child abuse** – In the context of coercive control this can include abusing their partner in front of their children, not allowing a parent/ caregiver to provide care to a child, asking a child to monitor or spy on their parent or caregiver, or making a child participate in abuse of the parent or caregiver.

WHAT DO I DO IF SOMEONE CLOSE TO ME IS EXPERIENCING COERCIVE CONTROL?

A person can often feel isolated, unsure of whether it is abuse and their ability to stop what is happening. Help and support is available:

- Listen to the person and respond with empathy.
- Talk through options and inform of people or services who will be helpful such as 1800RESPECT.
- Enquire about their immediate safety and consider if mandatory reporting is required.
- Make a plan for how you will continue to provide support or seek support.



2024 EDITION

BREAKING THE SILENCE

COERCIVE CONTROL INFO

RESOURCES

Conduct Protocol Unit, Presbyterian Church of Australia (NSW, ACT, WA, TAS) Phone: 02 9690 9325 | Email: cpu@jerichoroad.org.au | Website: breakingthesilence.org.au

Presbyterian Counselling Service

Jericho Road, Presbyterian Church of NSW Phone: 1800 818 133 | Email: counselling@jerichoroad.org.au | Website: jerichoroad.org.au/counselling

EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES

000 – If in immediate danger please call for police and ambulance.

1800RESPECT – National family, domestic and sexual violence support counselling service. This service is free and confidential. Available 24 hours, 7 days a week.

1800737732 or visit 1800respect.org.au

Men's Referral Service – For men in Australia who are concerned about their use of violence or abusive behaviours. Available 8am to 9pm (Monday – Friday); 9am to 6pm (Saturday and Sunday).

1300766491 or visit www.ntv.org.au

Mensline Australia- Supports men experiencing family and relationship difficulties. Telephone and online support. 1300 789 978 or visit www.mensline.org.au

Financial Counselling Australia – Access free resources and advice from a private counsellor. 1800 007 007 or visit www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au

Child Protection Helpline (NSW) – 132 111

Kids help line – is a free telephone and online service for children 1800 551 800

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/family-and-relationships/coercive-control/law>