

# END THE SILENCE ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

a zine about family violence for youth, by youth



**React**  
respect in action  
youth preventing violence



**Respect in Action (ReAct)** is a youth program of METRAC (the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children). It's made up of Youth Peer Facilitators who raise awareness, foster discussion, and motivate youth to end violence. We respect the knowledge and experiences of youth so that we can learn and move forward together.

Family violence is a problem that isn't really talked about. That's why we made this zine - to help youth understand what it is and what they can do about it.

## FAMILY VIOLENCE?

what is

It's abuse between family members such as parents, partners, siblings, grandparents, stepparents, stepchildren, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Since family violence often happens behind closed doors between people who are related or live together, it isn't taken as seriously as it should be. But it hurts people and no one should have to live with it.

# Family violence can be ...

**Emotional:** criticizing, insulting, or making fun of someone; making them feel worthless; treating them like crap; ignoring or stalking them; disrespecting their spiritual beliefs; threatening to tell their secrets; manipulating them to get what you want

**Physical:** hitting, pushing, kicking, pulling hair, or biting someone; holding them down or controlling their movement; not taking care of them when they depend on you; forcing them to take drugs or drink; driving fast or breaking stuff to scare them; threatening to hurt their kids or pets to control them

**Sexual:** any unwanted sexual behaviour, such as forced kissing or touching, incest, rape, threatening or manipulating someone to make them do sexual things, forcing someone to watch something sexual

**Financial:** stopping someone from getting money to control them; not letting them get a job; harassing them at work or forcing them to miss work; taking their money; forcing them to pay for all the expenses; making them rely on you for money

## Family violence often takes the form of ...

**Woman abuse:** any abuse of a woman, often done by a male partner (e.g. husband, boyfriend).

**Child abuse:** abuse of children or youth, done by an adult.

**Sibling abuse:** any abuse between brothers/sisters or stepbrothers/stepsisters.

**Elder abuse:** any abuse of older people, often done by family members who are younger than them.

# POWER & VIOLENCE

Violence is about power – it happens because some people get more respect than others in society. They can do what they want and stop others from doing the same. For example, men get more respect than women, adults get more respect than youth, people with money are seen as better, people of colour face racism, people with disabilities get shut out of public places, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer people are put down. This kind of power stuff plays out in families too.



# AGE \$ GENDER

**What does gender have to do with it?** Since women get less power and respect, they face more abuse, often by men they know. It happens all the time – statistics show that women and girls get a lot of abuse from their partners, fathers, brothers, uncles, and grandfathers.

**What does age have to do with it?** Youth get abused at home too, because they don't have much power and respect either. That's why statistics show that youth have a higher risk of getting abused by family members, especially girls and young women.

## **More info:**

- ★ **FREDA Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children ([www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda](http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/freda))**
- ★ **Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women ([www.criaw-icref.ca](http://www.criaw-icref.ca))**
- ★ **National Clearinghouse on Family Violence ([www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/index.html](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/index.html))**
- ★ **Child Abuse Prevention Website ([www.safekidsbc.ca](http://www.safekidsbc.ca))**

# the media ...

Abuse & control is often seen as a normal part of family life & relationships



## 6:00 NEWS

They seemed like such a nice family ... Oh, families are just like that, what are you going to do? ... Nobody even knew what was happening inside the house ... It was between him and her so I didn't get involved ...



"I love your lack of self respect/ While you're passed out on the deck/ I love my hands around your neck ..."

"I put my life in your hands ... Anything you want, I want to cater to you ... I'm here to serve you ... Your wish is my command ..."



"There's a four year old boy lyin' dead with a slit throat in your living room, ha-ha ... Now shut the f\*\*\* up and get what's comin' to you ..."

entertainment?

# but sometimes ...

**Truth about family violence does come out**

"Once upon a time there was a girl/ In her early years she had to learn how to grow up living in a war that she called home ... Bruises fade, father, but the pain remains the same ... To you it's just a memory, but for me it still lives on ..."  
(Christina Aguilera)

"I promised myself you wouldn't put your hands on me again ... I didn't sleep that night/ I held my pillow tight/ Now trust me when I say/ You have been told/ I'm telling you never to touch me no more ..."  
(Aliyah)

"I was too young to understand the risk when your moms come home off the midnight shift ... My pops said "You think that you could leave me?"/ He blasted my moms in the back/ She fell down screaming, I can't forget that/ My grandfather tried to close the door/ He got shot ten times in the stomach ... I started getting beatings everyday ... Dad, where was you when he made me strip/ Beat with belts like a slave with a whip/ Kicked me down steps outside in the snow/ Punched me in the chest, stomped me out on the floor ..."  
(LL Cool J)



"You just wanna use me/ You say 'love' then abuse me/ You never thought you'd lose me ... You thought I'd stay here hurtin'/ Your guilt trip's just not workin'/ Repressin' me to death/ Cuz now I'm choosin' life, yo/ I take the sacrifice, yo/ If everything must go, then go/ That's how I choose to live ..."  
(Lauryn Hill)

BIO of Missy Elliott: in her childhood, she saw her father abuse her mother and often had to retreat to a "better place", imagining herself as a performer. Her mom left and raised Missy on her own. She admired her mother's independent ways, and learned do the same in her music career.

the realities

**MYTH:** Family is there to protect you and make you strong.

**REALITY:** Families aren't safe for everybody and homes can be dangerous. For example, a woman is killed by her partner each week in Canada.

**MYTH:** A man will stop hitting his partner when she's pregnant.

**REALITY:** Canadian reports show that woman abuse increases during pregnancy. One U.S. study shows that murder is the leading cause of death for pregnant women.

**DON'T BUY THE BULLSHIT\*\***

**MYTH:** Child sexual abuse only happens to girls.

**REALITY:** It does happen to girls more, but boys face it too. Canadian statistics show that 1 in 3 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused before 18 years old. The point is, those numbers are too high for both girls and boys.

**MYTH:** Women and girls living with disabilities don't get abused.

**REALITY:** They're more at risk of abuse. 83% of women with disabilities are sexually assaulted over their lifetime and the rate of sexual abuse for girls with disabilities is 4 times higher than the national average.



**MYTH:** Insults and put downs aren't violence. It's just joking around.

**REALITY:** Words can harm people. Bruises go away, but emotional abuse can last forever and make someone feel worthless. Plus, emotional abuse can lead to other kinds of abuse too – remember, it's an abuse of power, just like all violence is.

**MYTH:** Hitting your kids will keep them in line.

**REALITY:** Love shouldn't hurt. Beating someone isn't for their good, it's harmful. Since raising a kid can be difficult, it's important for parents to find support when they feel frustrated so they don't feel alone.

**MYTH:** If a woman nags a man, sometimes he has to shut her up. Some people deserve abuse.

**REALITY:** No woman should be abused and no man has to use violence to communicate. The victim shouldn't be blamed for the violence they face.

**MYTH:** If a youth didn't want to get molested at home, they would have stopped it. They must've wanted it.

**REALITY:** Youth don't usually have their own money and shelter. They might also be worried about their immigration status or about their siblings. It's really hard to leave your family, even an abusive one, and most of the time youth don't have any choice but to stay.

# NANA BLAME GAME

"How could she let anyone touch her or her kids?"

In a society where women (especially young moms) don't get the respect they deserve, they're often blamed for "allowing" abuse to continue at home. But that's sexist and unfair.

**MYTH:** It's the mother's fault if she and her children are abused.

**REALITY:** Leaving an abusive relationship is really hard. Sometimes women think no one will believe them. They may worry about being able to support their kids alone. They may have grown up in an abusive family and don't know how to identify what's happening to them as abuse. Abuse is the abuser's fault. Don't play the mama blame game!



"This goes out to all my baby mamas/ I got love for all my baby mamas/ It's about time we had our own song/ Don't know what took so long/ Cuz now-a-days it like a badge of honor/ To be a baby mama / I see ya payin' ya bills / I see ya workin' ya job / I see ya goin' to school/ And girl, I know it's hard/ And even though ya fed up with makin' beds up/ Girl, keep ya head up ..." (Fantasia Barrino)

# BLAME "THOSE PEOPLE" GAME

**"Those people have violent families.  
They're the ones with the problem."**


**MYTH:** Some kinds of people have more violent families than others.

**REALITY:** Family violence cuts across all communities (e.g. race, faith, national groups). It's messed up to blame it on one group. But in this society, some communities do have fewer places to get help when they face violence. Sometimes they can't find services in their language or that respect their culture and/or faith. Or they might not say anything because they're afraid of being stereotyped or treated with racism. Now THAT'S a big problem, isn't it?

## Here are some services for newcomer youth:

- ★ Culturelink  
(416-588-6288)
- ★ Polycultural Immigrant Services  
(416-233-0055)
- ★ SEAS Centre  
(416-362-1375)
- ★ South Asian Family Support Centre  
(416-431-4847)
- ★ Tropicana Community Services Organization  
(416-439-9009)
- ★ Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples  
(416-435-8545)
- ★ St. Christopher House  
(416-925-2103)

# How can I help?



Family violence happens a lot. Chances are that we all know someone who has gone through family violence. Sometimes it's someone close to us. It's hard to know what to do when someone tells us about being abused at home. But here are some things you can say.

## 1. I believe you.

Survivors of family violence are told it's their fault when they get abused. They're blamed for it. So listening to them and not judging them can really make a difference.

## 2. It's not your fault.

Nobody deserves to be abused. Telling them that they didn't deserve it well help them understand that there's no excuse for the abuse they faced.

### 3. You're not alone.

It's sad, but people are abused all the time. You can let them know that there are lots of people who have been through similar struggles and survived.

### 4. I'm sorry this happened to you.

You can comfort them by telling them you're sorry they were hurt. And it's okay to feel sad and upset that someone close to you was abused. You can get help or talk to someone you trust (still keeping it confidential) to take care of yourself too.

### 5. I can help you get help.

Don't force them to get help, but let them know that when they're ready, you'll do what you can to help them find support. Check out the last two pages for places you can call or go to for help.



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"No more compromises/ I see past your disguises/ Blinding through mind control/ Stealin' my eternal soul/ Appealin' through material/ To keep me as your slave/ But I get out/ Oh, I get out of all your boxes/ I get out/ Oh, you can't hold me in these chains/ I'll get out/ Oh, I want out of social bondage/ Knowin' my condition/ Oh, is the reason I must change ..." (Lauryn Hill)

# RESOURCES FOR YOUTH

## **24 Emergency Numbers:**

- ★ Assaulted Women's Helpline: 1-866-863-0511/ 1-866-863-7868 (TTY)
- ★ Distress Centres of Toronto: 416-408-4357/ 416-408-0007 (TTY)
- ★ Emergency (police, fire, ambulance): 911
- ★ Kids Help Phone: 1-800-668-6868
- ★ Street Helpline: 416-392-3777
- ★ The Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape: 416-597-8808/ 416-597-1214 (TTY)

## **Shelters and Hostels (places you and/or family members can stay away from home)**

- ★ Eva's Initiatives: 416-441-4060
- ★ Fred Victor Centre, Women's Hostel: 416-368-2642
- ★ Horizons for Youth: 416-781-9898
- ★ Nellie's: 416-461-1084/ 416-461-7561 (TTY)
- ★ North York Women's Shelter: 416-781-0479
- ★ Redwood Shelter: 416-533-9372/ 416-533-3736 (TTY)
- ★ Red Door Abused Women's Shelter: 416-469-3457
- ★ 1st Stop Woodlawn: 416-922-3271
- ★ Tumivut Youth Shelter: 416-651-6750
- ★ Women's Habitat: 416-252-1785/ 416-252-0361 (TTY)
- ★ Yorktown Shelter for Women: 416-394-2999
- ★ Youth Without Shelter: 416-748-0110

## **Shelters and Services for Young Parents**

- ★ Humewood House: 416-651-5657
- ★ Jessie's Centre for Teenagers: 416-365-6348
- ★ Massey Centre for Women: 416-425-6348
- ★ Rosalie Hall: 416-438-6880

## **Rape Crisis Help (if you've been sexually assaulted)**

- ★ Scarborough Hospital Sexual Assault Care Centre: 416-495-2555/ 416-498-6739 (TTY)
- ★ Women's College Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Care Centre: 416-323-6040

## **Sexual Health Clinics (to get tested, birth control, etc.)**

- ★ Anne Johnston Health Station: 416-486-8666/ 416-486-6759 (TTY)
- ★ Hassle Free Clinic: 416-922-0566/ 416-922-3428 (TTY)
- ★ The House, Planned Parenthood: 416-927-7171
- ★ Rexdale Community Health Centre: 416-744-0066
- ★ Shout Clinic: 416-927-8553

## **Other Important Numbers**

- ★ Across Boundaries (ethno racial mental health centre): 416-787-3007
- ★ AIDS and Sexual Health Hotline (info about HIV & sexuality): 416-392-2437/1-800-668-2437
- ★ Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youthline: 416-962-9688
- ★ Justice for Children and Youth (legal help for youth under 18): 416-920-1633
- ★ Teen Sex Infoline (anonymous info on sexual health): 416-961-3200
- ★ YOUTHLINK (counseling services): 416-967-1773

REACT IS A YOUTH PROGRAM OF



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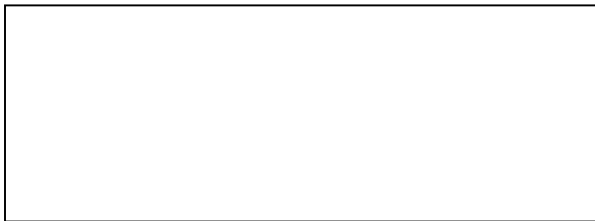
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Ontario Women's Justice Network: [www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)

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