

Believe in and trust your own feelings

You may not have believed until recently that her behaviour could be labelled as violent. You may not have told anyone about the abuse and violence that you have experienced. You may have told friends who did not understand the danger and distress you have been experiencing.

*You are the best judge of how safe you are.
If you feel scared and unsafe in her presence,
something is wrong.*

You could:

Tell friends you trust and ask for their support.

Organise a safe place to go

Telephone one of the services listed on this pamphlet and ask to speak to a worker who understands Lesbian issues.

Ring the Women's Legal Service and discuss your rights.

Contact the South Australian Police Child and Family Investigation Unit nearest to you to obtain a protection order.

Change your phone number, use an answering machine, change the locks on your house.

Remember, her violence is NOT your fault!

If you are a friend show your support!

Pass comment if you witness behaviour that you believe is violent and abusive.

Keep informed and talk with others about the types of behaviours that are violent and abusive and the services that are available to Lesbians escaping domestic violence. Listen and believe when a Lesbian confides in you. Do not offer excuses for the violence. Ask how you can help. Respect her confidentiality.

Support the rights of all Lesbians to live safely

For support contact

Southern Women's Community Health Centre
8384 9555

Northern Women's Community Health Centre
8252 3711

Dale Street Women's Health Centre
8447 0700

Women's Health Statewide
Women's Health Line 1300 882 880

TTY **1800 182 098**

Domestic Violence Crisis Service
8223 2200

Domestic Violence Help Line
1800 800 098

Women's Legal Service **8221 5553**
TTY **1800 670 864**

Second Story Youth Health
8326 6053

Yarrow Place Rape & Sexual Assault Service
8226 8777
TTY **1800 817 421**

SAPOL Child and Family Investigation Units

Adelaide **8463 7090**

Christies Beach **8326 9133**

Elizabeth **8207 9473**

Port Adelaide **8207 6413**

Holden Hill **8396 4492**

Sturt **8207 4801**

Police Attendance **11444**



For further information contact the:

Lesbian Domestic Violence Action Group (Inc).
PO Box 437, Noarlunga Centre, S.A. 5168
8384 9555

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*“I never
believed she'd
abuse me.”*

**Information on
domestic violence
for Lesbians and
gay women**



Violence and abuse within Lesbian relationships is a crime

Violence is any behaviour adopted by a woman to control you, to cause you physical, sexual, emotional, financial and/or spiritual damage and causes you to live in fear.

Threats are a form of violence.

Biting, hitting, punching and using a weapon are all forms of violence.

Forcing you to participate in sex against your will is a crime.

Other forms of violence can include:

- unsafe driving
- destroying your possessions
- insulting or humiliating you in public
- lying
- making you believe you are crazy or stupid
- controlling your money
- isolating you from family friends and other Lesbians, or your community
- hurting or threatening to hurt your children, your pets or friends
- blackmail and/or manipulation
- treating you like a servant or as inferior
- threatening murder or suicide
- drugging you
- threatening to disclose your Lesbian or gay identity to employers or your family
- creating a sense of impending punishment / no-win situation
- invading your privacy
- stalking
- controlling your movements

As a victim of violence and abuse in a Lesbian or gay relationship, you may believe that you are equally responsible for your abuser's behaviour.

You are not to blame for HER violence!

All violence has a psychological effect. Your belief in your self worth and your sense of having rights and choices are eroded when an intimate partner constantly abuses you.

If you are, or have been in a violent relationship, you may have some of the following feelings.

You may feel:

- depressed, humiliated or even suicidal
- afraid that you have failed as a lover
- furious with your abuser
- confused because she is often gentle and kind.
- guilty for leaving her
- frustrated because you tried everything to improve the relationship
- panicked about losing your Lesbian or gay identity outside the relationship.
- afraid that she will be more violent if you leave
- scared of being alone
- worried about your financial security
- relieved
- made to believe that you deserved the abuse
- afraid to tell and/or trust anyone

Seek support from your friends or from a counsellor who is aware of the effects of violence and abuse in Lesbian and gay relationships.

You have the right to be safe

**Violence is unacceptable
You deserve to live with and love women free
of violence and abuse.**

There are many common beliefs or myths about why a Lesbian or gay woman chooses to be violent.

- She had a sad and traumatic childhood.
- She drinks or uses drugs.
- She has trouble expressing her feelings.
- She is oppressed as a lesbian or gay woman.
- She cannot control her anger.
- Something about you drives her to violence.

These are all excuses!

We all experience trauma, stress, anger and fear.

- *An abusive Lesbian chooses to use violence to control you and to get her own way.*
- *She can control her violence.*
- *She chooses control and abuse.*
- *She uses violence deliberately to weaken your choices to act.*
- *She may goad you into fighting back so she can lay the blame for the violence on you.*

Never think that the violence is your fault!

It may be helpful to look at some of the ways you have coped until now

- You have been careful about what you say and about how and when you say things that could upset your abuser.
- You have tried to talk to her about her stress, her drug use, or her moods.
- You have stopped doing anything that is likely to upset her.
- You have adapted your behaviour to meet the expectations that she has.
- You have tried to make agreements and to set boundaries in your relationship with her.
- You have probably tried to stop the violence.

**Give yourself credit for everything that you have tried.
Only she can change her behaviour!**