House Sarah Resources

…..transforming the lives of those who come seeking help… 6 Desvouex Road Suva, 6793100665

Of

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**4. Some common misconceptions about family violence**

**Introduction**

Most of us have some attitudes, beliefs or ideas about family which are incorrect and are based on a misconception about what family violence is and who it affects. The aim of the list below is to challenge those misconceptions.

**1. It only happens to ‘certain women’:** It can be thought that abuse happens to a certain ‘type’ of women, this type may be based on: a socio economic status; a level of inner strength or confidence; religious or cultural back­ground etc. This is not the case. Domestic abuse can affect any woman regardless of her race, colour, religion, socioeconomic sta­tus, sexual orientation or level of confidence and inner strength. The only common denominator within a domestic abuse situation is an abusive man.

**2. It happens because of…:** Family violence can sometimes be thought to be caused by many things. These could include alcohol or drug misuse; unem­ployment; mental or physical health problems; stress; a lack of submission by a woman; unemployment or historically having lived through abuse as a child. This is incorrect. Abuse happens because an abusive person chooses to behave in a way that will enable them to have power and control over another person. All other reasons that are given to cause the abuse are excuses and are used to justify abusive behaviour.

**3. A woman can cause a man to become abusive:** Often a man will tell his partner that she “made” him do it or ’she provoked me – it is all her own fault. Many victims have been asked, “What did you do to let things get this bad?” A woman is never responsible if a man chooses to behave in an abusive and controlling way.

**4. Victims of family violence understand what is happening to them**

When someone is in an abusive relationship, they will often not understand what is happening, and may not even realise what they are experiencing is abuse. Everything is a big confusing mess.

**5. “Why doesn’t she just leave?”:** This is a question asked many times about those in abusive rela­tionships. If it was that easy, of course a woman would leave. An abusive man will ensure his victim thinks she cannot cope alone, will undermine and put her down until she believes she can’t cope alone. It often is financially impossible to leave the situation. Where can she and the childen find a place to stay? What will her family and his family say? Statistically the time a woman is at most risk of being murdered is when she is trying to leave an abusive relationship, therefore leaving is a very dangerous thing to do. Also maybe we should be focusing on what an abusive man should or should not be doing, rather than looking at what his victim, who will feel completely powerless can do.

**6. Leaving is a choice:** As with the previous question, there is a misconception that when a woman is in an abusive relationship, she has the choice to leave. This is often not the case. As has already been mentioned, leaving will put her in immense danger. A perpetrator may threaten to harm the woman, her children or himself should she make any attempts to leave. Also when in an abusive relationship, a woman may believe that leaving is outside of the realms of possibility. Also there is limited access to refuge accommodation and not everyone has families living close by. There is limited economic support available – all this means that for her leaving is NOT a choice.

**7. Abusive men are not bad fathers:** It has often been stated that if a man is abusive to his partner that does not necessarily make him a bad father. This is incorrect. By being abusive to the mother of the children, he is being a bad father.

**8. Family violence is about anger:** Abuse behaviour is a choice to behave in a controlling way; it is not about being angry. All abusive tactics employed by abusive men will be used regardless of whether they feel anger or not.

**9. If someone discloses abuse they are probably being “over dramatic” :** The statement is both completely untrue and very dangerous. In actual fact any evidence of abuse is likely to be the tip of the iceberg. Most women living in threatening and controlling situa­tions are reluctant to admit what is happening to them for many reasons. These include the shame of being abused; the fear of what their abusive partner will do if they tell anyone; their partner will have minimised and justified his behaviour to her, which will often cause her to believe it wasn’t ‘that’ bad and he was justified in being abusive.

**10. False Repentance:** Although it is possible for perpetrators to change and be trans­formed through God’s power, very often a perpetrator will appear repentant or appear to become a Christian in order to gain space for his abuse to continue. If he appears to come to faith in Christ and/or appears repentant or remorseful; this cannot be taken at face value. To ascertain whether repentance or conver­sion is genuine it should be measured over a long period of time, consulting regularly with the victim, as she is most able to see if change has taken place.

**Adapted by the House of Sarah (**[**www.houseofsarah.org**](http://www.houseofsarah.org) **) for the Pacific context from the Restored Church Kit (**[**www.restoredrelationship.org**](http://www.restoredrelationship.org)