

## What causes Family Violence?

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Family violence is not caused by anger, addiction, past victimization, losing one's culture or family breakdown. Violence is a learned behaviour; abusers use violence because they have learned that it is an effective means to get what they want. Abuse is a Choice.

Many abusers will blame others for their violent behaviour, even the victim. Some common excuses for using violence are:

- She/he made me do it
- I just blew up, I was out of control
- I was drunk, I just blacked out
- I was angry

## Victims Resist Violence

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Whenever people are treated badly they resist (Wade, 1997). When people are being abused, they use a variety of strategies to try to reduce, prevent or stop the abuse and to maintain their dignity and their self-respect. Crying, trying to stop or prevent violence, feeling shame, disrespect, or oppression and going somewhere in their minds are just a few of the strategies that victims have used to resist violence perpetrated against them.

## Abusers have a choice

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This is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that perpetrators make plans to stop victims from resisting.

- Pulling the phone out of the wall so that she cannot call for help
- Isolating her from friends and family
- Threatening to kill themselves if she leaves
- Threatening to take the children away

Or make decisions about how to be abusive.

- He will be careful to not leave bruises that would be easily visible.
- He will wait to abuse his partner until they are alone even if he is blaming his behaviour on something that happened earlier when they were around others.

Family violence is not about losing control. It is about using violence and abuse to gain and maintain control over another person. This is good news because if we believe that a person can choose violence this means that they are also capable of choosing non-violence. Even men who are abusive men have times in their lives where they choose non-violence. Abusive men can choose to change!