

Healing Starts Here

A Guide for Survivors
of Domestic Violence

*Empowering Your First Steps Toward
Safety, Strength, and Self-Love*



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Finding support in Australia

Forward

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"We see you. We honour your courage. And we want you to know – you are not alone."

We created Healing Through Love because we know the pain of silence. We've witnessed the strength it takes to keep going when everything feels broken. And we believe, with every fibre of our being, that healing is not only possible – it is your birthright.

Both of us have walked difficult paths. We've experienced trauma, self-doubt, and the ache of rebuilding. But from those ashes came something powerful: a shared mission to create safe, supportive spaces for women to begin again.

Healing Through Love began as a simple idea – to offer free pamper days for survivors of domestic and family violence. What started as an act of care has grown into a movement of love, community, and change. We've met hundreds of courageous women who remind us that no matter how long you've been in the dark, there is always a way back to the light.

This guide is for you. Whether you're still in the relationship, recently left, or years into your healing, we hope these pages feel like a soft hand on your shoulder – reminding you that you're not invisible, you're not broken, and you're not alone.

Inside, you'll find gentle support, practical tools, and real-life resources designed specifically for Australian women. You'll also find reflections, reminders, and the hope we all need on the hardest days.

Healing doesn't happen overnight. It happens one breath, one boundary, one brave step at a time.

Thank you for trusting us to walk with you.

With deep respect and unwavering belief in your strength

You Are Not Alone

– Understanding Domestic Violence

“Sometimes the most dangerous place is the one we call home. But I want you to know—there is a way out, and you are never alone in this.”

Domestic and family violence doesn't always leave bruises you can see. It can start quietly. A raised voice. A controlling glance. A bank card taken away. And over time, the walls close in.

In Australia, 1 in 6 women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former partner. That number doesn't include emotional abuse, financial control, or coercive behaviours—forms of violence that can be just as damaging.

Domestic violence is not just about anger. It's about power.

When someone deliberately uses fear, shame, threats, or force to control another person—physically, emotionally, financially, or spiritually—that is abuse.

You might feel confused or conflicted right now. You might love the person who's hurting you. You might still be holding on to hope that they'll change. These are normal responses.

But here's the truth:

- ♥ You don't deserve to be afraid in your own home.
- ♥ Love should never hurt.
- ♥ You are not to blame.

Whether you are still in the relationship, thinking about leaving, or have already left, this guide is for you. You are seen. You are believed. You are not alone.

You deserve safety. You deserve love without fear. You are not to blame.

Myths vs. Truths About Domestic Violence

It's easy to doubt yourself when society, media, or even loved ones downplay abuse. Let's clear up some of the most common myths that keep survivors silent.

Myth	Truth
"It's not abuse unless they hit you."	Abuse comes in many forms – including emotional, financial, and verbal.
"They're just under a lot of stress."	Stress is no excuse for abusive behaviour. Everyone has stress.
"They didn't mean it. They apologised."	Abusers often apologise – then repeat the cycle. Abuse is a pattern.
"I provoked them. I shouldn't have..."	You are never responsible for someone else's choice to abuse.
"If it was really bad, they'd just leave."	Fear, finances, children, and trauma bonds can all keep someone stuck.
"But they're such a good parent/partner/friend."	Abusers often hide their behaviour from others. It doesn't make it right.

"You are not crazy. You are not overreacting. You are waking up."

You don't need anyone else's permission to define your experience. If something doesn't feel right—it isn't. And naming it is the first brave step toward reclaiming your power.

Red Flags – Recognising the Signs

“It didn’t start this way. At first, they were charming, attentive, even loving. Then slowly, almost silently, things changed.”

Domestic and family violence often begins in subtle ways. It’s not always shouting or slamming doors. Sometimes, it’s the silent erosion of your confidence, your choices, your freedom.

Here are some **common red flags** to be aware of. If any of this sound familiar, know this: your experiences are valid, and help is available.

▶ Emotional & Psychological Abuse

- They constantly criticise, belittle, or mock you
- They gaslight you – making you doubt your memory or sanity
- They isolate you from friends, family, or support networks
- They give you the silent treatment or withhold affection to punish you
- You feel like you’re “walking on eggshells” around them

▶ Financial Abuse

- They control or monitor your spending
- You are denied access to joint bank accounts
- You’re not allowed to work, study, or earn income
- They use your name to take out loans or credit

▶ Physical Abuse

- They push, grab, hit, or restrain you
- They damage your belongings or punch walls
- They threaten you with weapons or intimidation
- You’ve been physically harmed – or fear you will be

▶ **Sexual Abuse**

- They force or pressure you into sexual activity
- They use threats, guilt, or manipulation
- They refuse to practise safe sex or ignore consent

▶ **Tech & Digital Abuse**

- They demand access to your phone or passwords
- They track your location or monitor your messages
- They shame or threaten you online

“If you’re reading this and nodding silently, know that you are not imagining it. You are recognising it—and that’s incredibly brave.”

Your Feelings Are Valid

“You may feel broken. You are not. You are responding the way any human would when their safety and identity have been shaken.”

Survivors of domestic violence often experience a whirlwind of emotions—fear, guilt, shame, anger, confusion, numbness. These are not signs of weakness. These are **signs of survival**.

Many survivors blame themselves:

“I should’ve seen it earlier.”

“I let it go on too long.”

“I made them angry.”

But here’s the truth:

Abuse is never your fault.

No matter what was said. No matter how long you stayed. You did what you had to do to survive.

♥ Common Emotional Responses

- **Fear** – of the future, of being alone, of them coming back
- **Shame** – for what others might think or say
- **Guilt** – especially if children were involved
- **Relief** – followed by waves of doubt
- **Anger** – at them, the system, or yourself
- **Numbness** – a trauma response to overwhelm

These feelings are normal. They may come in waves. Some days you may feel strong. Other days, you may feel like giving up. That’s okay.

“Healing isn’t linear. It’s a slow, sacred returning to yourself.”

You don’t have to figure it all out today. Just know that whatever you’re feeling is valid—and there is no shame in needing support.

Safety First – Creating a Safety Plan (AU Resources)

“You don’t need to have it all figured out to take the first step. You just need to feel safe doing it.”

If you’re planning to leave an abusive relationship—or feel that violence is escalating—it’s important to have a safety plan. Even if you’re not ready to leave, having a plan can help reduce risk.

✨ Your Personal Safety Plan

- **Keep a phone charged and accessible at all times**
- **Memorise or write down key numbers** (e.g. 000, a trusted friend, 1800RESPECT)
- **Pack an emergency bag** with:
 - ID and birth certificates
 - Medicare card
 - Medication
 - Spare keys
 - Essential documents
 - Some cash
- **Let someone you trust know** what’s happening if it’s safe to do so
- **Avoid confrontation** when your partner is likely to be violent (e.g. under the influence)

📱 Helpful Apps

- **Daisy App** – connects you to support services near you
- **Sunny App** – created for women with disability experiencing violence

☎ Emergency Contacts (Australia)

- **Police & emergency:** 000
- **24/7 Support:** 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)
- **Translating & Interpreting Service:** 131 450

Your safety is your right. You don’t need permission to protect yourself.

Finding Support in Australia

“Help is not a weakness. Asking for support is one of the strongest things you can do.”

There are many free, confidential services across Australia designed to support you – whether you're in crisis, needing legal advice, or beginning to rebuild.

♥ National Support Services

- **1800RESPECT** – 24/7 counselling and referral service
- **Women's Legal Services Australia** – free legal help
- **Safe Steps (VIC)** – 24/7 crisis response for women and children
- **DV Connect (QLD)** – crisis and counselling services

♥ Tasmania-Based Support

- **Family Violence Counselling and Support Service (FVCSS)**
- **Engender Equality** – therapeutic support for people affected by family violence
- **Safe Choices Tasmania** – practical support for leaving violence

You are never alone in this. There is a whole community ready to walk with you.

After Leaving – What Now?

“Leaving is not the end of your story. It’s the beginning of your healing.”

Leaving an abusive relationship is courageous – but it can bring new challenges. You may face grief, financial strain, or even fear of retaliation. But there are support systems to help you rebuild.

What You Might Face:

- **Emotional ups and downs** – trauma doesn’t disappear overnight
- **Housing transitions** – shelters, crisis accommodation
- **Financial adjustments** – especially if you relied on their income
- **Legal issues** – custody, protection orders, property

Support Available:

- **Centrelink:** Crisis Payment for Extreme Circumstances of Family and Domestic Violence
- **Tenancy Support:** Some states offer immediate tenancy transfers for DV survivors
- **Leave from Work:** You may be entitled to 10 days paid domestic violence leave
- **Counselling:** Many services offer trauma-informed therapy free of charge

Rebuilding takes time, and that’s okay. Step by step, your life becomes yours again.

Reclaiming You – Self-Care, Confidence & Boundaries

Nurture Your Nervous System

When we've lived in fear, our bodies stay in "survival mode." Begin gently calming your system:



Breathe in for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 6



Wrap yourself in a blanket like a hug



Walk barefoot in grass or near the beach



Whisper affirmations like "I am safe now"

Rebuilding Self-Worth

Abuse often attacks your identity. Here's how to start rebuilding:



Write one thing you like about yourself each day



Reflect: “What would I say to my younger self right now?”



Celebrate even the tiniest wins—leaving bed, calling a friend, cooking dinner



Surround yourself with people who see your worth

Boundaries Are Brave

Learning to say “no” is a powerful part of healing.

Try:

- “I’m not comfortable with that.”
- “That doesn’t work for me.”
- “I need time to think.”

Your needs matter. Your voice matters. You don’t need to explain or justify your boundaries.

Saying Yes to Joy

You deserve joy—not just survival.

Start small:

- Light a candle you love
- Dance in your kitchen
- Laugh at silly memes
- Rest without guilt

Joy is a birthright, not a reward for healing.

Reflection Prompts

What does safety mean to me today?

Where in my body am I holding pain—and what might it need?

What would I say to the person I used to be?

What does freedom feel like to me?

If I believed I was worthy, what would I choose next?

Join the Healing Through Love Community

“Healing doesn’t happen in isolation. It happens in community.”

If this e-book touched something in you—know there’s more support waiting.

🌸 Attend a Pamper Day – A free day of care and connection for survivors

🌸 Volunteer With Us – Help create safe spaces for women

🌸 Donate – Every gift helps us serve more survivors

🌸 Visit Our Website – More resources, e-books, and support

[Find out more](#)

You Are Loved

**“You may not feel strong today. That’s okay.
The fact that you’re still here—that you’re
reading this—is strength.”**

Take one breath. One moment. One step at a time.
You are not alone. You are not broken.
You are becoming.

♥ “And the day came when she finally
realised—she was the one she had been
waiting for.”