

# Post-Separation Domestic Violence...

## A Reality

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viff

Centre de recherche interdisciplinaire  
sur la violence familiale  
et la violence faite aux femmes



Assistance aux femmes  
de Montréal, inc.



# What Is Domestic Violence?<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ **A WAY OF DOMINATING ONE'S PARTNER AND ASSERTING ONE'S POWER OVER THAT PERSON**
- ▶ **MAY TAKE A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT FORMS: PHYSICAL, VERBAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, SEXUAL, ECONOMIC AND SPIRITUAL**
- ▶ **MAY OCCUR IN A SPOUSAL, EXTRAMARITAL OR DATING RELATIONSHIP AND AT ANY STAGE IN LIFE**
- ▶ **MAY OCCUR IN BOTH HETEROSEXUAL AND HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS**

## Domestic violence is not

- a loss of control
- a sign of love

### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Your partner slaps, punches, shoves or hits you, pins you down, throws or breaks things or your personal belongings, etc.

### ECONOMIC ABUSE

Your partner forbids you to work or forces you to work, refuses to give you access to or information about financial resources, forces you to pay his personal debts using your credit cards or money, etc.

### VERBAL ABUSE

Your partner yells or swears at you, speaks in a very authoritarian way or, alternatively, uses a tone or expresses himself in a way that only you can understand, and if you do not meet his expectations, you run the risk of being physically abused, etc.

### SEXUAL ABUSE

Your partner forces you to or strongly insists that you have sex with him or with others, demands that pornographic material be involved, compares you physically or sexually with other women. Does not take the children into consideration when he wants to have sex, etc.

### SPIRITUAL ABUSE

Your partner controls you by means of religion, prevents you from practising your religion, forces you and your children to practise his, etc.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Your partner scorns or criticizes you, discourages you in everything you undertake, insults or rejects you, isolates you from your friends or family, threatens you, is always disparaging and insulting in his attitudes and remarks toward you: "Your cooking is revolting," "You've no idea how to bring up your children," "You're just useless," etc.

# What Is Post-Separation Domestic Violence?<sup>2</sup>

**ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE OR ABUSE (SEXUAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, VERBAL, ECONOMIC, SPIRITUAL OR PHYSICAL) PERPETRATED BY AN EX-SPOUSE, EX-LOVER OR EX-PARTNER FOLLOWING SEPARATION.**

## Some Figures

In 1999, 172,000 Canadian women experienced some form of violence following separation. Of those women, 22% said that the violence became more severe after separation, 40% reported that the severity remained the same, while 37% said that the violence began after separation.

## Different Forms<sup>4,5</sup>

### PHYSICAL ABUSE

Your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner:

- Throws things at you
- Shoves you
- Tries to strangle you

### HARASSMENT

Your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner:

- Hangs around your neighbourhood
- Tries to contact you by phone, letter, e-mail, fax, graffiti or by putting notes on your car
- Calls your home or your family repeatedly to trace you
- Forces his way into your home, saying that he is fully entitled to do so because you're his wife
- Harasses you by legal means: for instance, makes false allegations about you to child protective services or files repeated family law claims

<sup>1</sup> La violence conjugale, c'est quoi au juste? (1993). Montreal: Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner:

- Makes you feel guilty and inadequate by telling you you're a lousy mother
- Cries in front of the children
- Criticizes the way you bring up your children, such as what you feed them, how you dress them, how you entertain them or support them in their development, etc.
- Threatens to kidnap your children if certain of his demands are not met
- Threatens to take custody away from you or prevent you from obtaining custody
- Threatens to harm you physically
- Claims that the separation or family break-up is all your fault
- Makes suicide threats
- Threatens to kill you or your children
- Makes disparaging remarks when speaking to you

## SEXUAL ABUSE

Your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner:

- Demands that you have sex with him
- Interrogates you about your sex life
- Forces his way into your home and rapes you (or sexually assaults you)

## CONTROL

Your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner:

- Refuses to give you information about the children
- Demands that you not forget anything when you leave the children with him for the weekend
- Refuses to make any compromises respecting visiting hours in order to help you out
- Tries to obtain information in order to hamper your requests
- Stretches out the time when you discuss things in order to keep you near him

## VERBAL ABUSE

Your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner:

- Raises his voice with you
- Yells at you
- Swears at you

# How Do I Identify Post-Separation Domestic Violence?<sup>6,7</sup>

In my experience, post-separation domestic violence:

Has become less severe or has taken a different form, compared with the domestic violence you suffered before the separation

Has remained the same, become worse or began at the time of separation

Is perpetrated by your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner when you hand over the children, speak on the phone or exchange e-mails

Is not perpetrated directly by your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner, but instead by the children at their father's urging or under his influence

Occurred for the first time during the separation. However, efforts to control others may occur before the separation

Follows on from violence experienced at the time of separation

Physical, verbal or sexual abuse occurs after separation

Physical, verbal or sexual abuse ceases after separation, but control and psychological abuse continue

OR

<sup>2</sup> Brownridge, D. A. (2006). Violence against women post-separation. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 11*(5): 514-530.

<sup>3</sup> Hotton, T. (2001). Spousal violence after marital separation. *Juristat, 21*(7): 1-19.

<sup>4</sup> Rinfret-Raynor, M., et al. (2008). Violence conjugale postséparation en contexte d'exercice de droits d'accès aux enfants. In S. Arcand, D. Damant, S. Gravel & E. Harper (Eds.), *Violences faites aux femmes. Problèmes sociaux et interventions sociales*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, p. 185-207.

<sup>5</sup> Wuest, J., et al. (2003). Intrusion: The central problem for family health promotion among children and single mothers after leaving an abusive partner. *Qualitative Health Research, 13*(5): 597-622.

<sup>6</sup> Rinfret-Raynor, M., et al. (2008). La violence conjugale en contexte de garde et de droits d'accès aux enfants. In D. Damant, S. Arcand, E. Harper & S. Gravel (Eds.), *Violences faites aux femmes. Problèmes sociaux et interventions sociales*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec.

<sup>7</sup> Hotton, T. (2001). Spousal violence after marital separation. *Juristat, 21*(7): 1-19.

# What Can You Do to Draw Up a Protection Strategy?<sup>8</sup>

**TO PREVENT YOUR EX-SPOUSE, EX-LOVER OR EX-PARTNER FROM FORCING HIS WAY INTO YOUR HOME AND TO ENSURE THAT YOU AND HE ARE TOGETHER FOR AS SHORT A TIME AS POSSIBLE, YOU CAN...**

- Hand over the children in a public place. If this is impossible, hand over the children outside the home (on the sidewalk, for instance)
- Shorten the time it takes to hand over the children by making sure that everything is ready when the father arrives to pick them up

**TO AVOID HAVING TO TALK TO YOUR EX-SPOUSE, EX-LOVER OR EX-PARTNER, YOU CAN...**

- Write any necessary information regarding the children in a diary kept in one of your children's bags, so that he doesn't have an opportunity in conversation to criticize you or denigrate you
- Communicate with him by e-mail rather than by phone

**TO ENSURE YOUR OWN SAFETY AND THAT OF YOUR CHILDREN AND TO PROVIDE GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATING, YOU CAN ...**

- File a complaint with the police
- Note down facts that can constitute solid evidence in a complaint filed with the police (threats, physical or sexual abuse of the children, alcohol or drug abuse, refusal to accept the end of the relationship, physical or sexual abuse against you, refusal to accept responsibility for any violent acts)
- Ask your lawyer to request that certain terms and conditions be included in the court ruling:
  - o Who is entitled to have contact with the children
  - o If the father is not supervised when he sees the children, measures to ensure that he doesn't say anything negative about you while the children are around
  - o Measures to ensure that there are no restrictions on communication between you and the children
  - o Measures to be taken to ensure a safe environment for the children
  - o Spell out the property that you must provide and the property that the children's father must provide
  - o Decisions regarding alimony
  - o Length and times of father's visits, days when he has the children, times when he comes to pick them up and drops them off
  - o Requirements for handing over children (places, conditions)
  - o Things you want to know when your children are with their father

- o Sharing of responsibilities regarding children's leisure and recreational activities
- o Penalties for father's abusive, negligent or harassing behaviour toward you or your children, and penalties for failure to comply with conditions set out in the court ruling
- o In the event that the father is supervised when he is with the children, ensure that you are informed of the frequency of the reports submitted to the court and receive a summary of the content of the reports

# Can I Identify the Impacts That Post-Separation Domestic Violence May Have on Me?<sup>9</sup>

## Physical Health

### I suffer from...

- Headaches
- Various fears
- High blood pressure
- Injuries
- Stomach trouble

## Mental Health

### I feel...

- Depressed, even to the point of having to take medication
- Depressed to the point of wanting to let him have the children
- Stressed out
- Very worried
- Anxious
- Lonely

### I feel that...

- I trust myself less and less
- I like myself less and less

## Financial Problems

### I had to...

- Quit my job
- Stop working outside the home because: I'm on a leave of absence from work, I'm worn out or depressed, I'm afraid for myself and my children, I have young children that I have to take care of on my own, etc.

## Indirect effects on mother-child relationship:

The above-mentioned impacts of post-separation domestic violence can affect a mother's availability to care for her children on a day-to-day basis: washing them, dressing them, helping them with their homework, listening to them, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Rinfrét-Raynor, M. et coll. (2007, juillet 6). *Coping mechanisms and consequences for mother and child living in a domestic violence post-separation context.* Présenté au 10<sup>ième</sup> congrès de psychologie tenu à Prague.

<sup>9</sup> Rinfrét-Raynor, M. et coll. (2007, juillet 6). *Coping mechanisms and consequences for mother and child living in a domestic violence post-separation context.* Présenté au 10<sup>ième</sup> congrès de psychologie tenu à Prague.

# How Can Post-Separation Domestic Violence Affect My Children?<sup>10</sup>

## Children under 2 Years of Age

### During episodes of abuse

- Crying
- Nervousness (for instance, vivid images and loud noises associated with violence may cause anxiety<sup>11</sup>)

### Upon returning from stay at father's

- Disturbance of daily routine
- Aggressive behaviour

### Overall state

- Aggressiveness
- Trouble sleeping

## Children Aged 3 to 9

### Upon returning from stay at father's

- Agitated and unruly
- Ask to see father

### Behavioural consequences

- Challenge your rules and authority
- Verbally abusive toward you (for instance, child may develop inappropriate ways of expressing anger and other emotions)
- Lower marks at school

### Psychological consequences

- Withdrawn child

### Physical consequences

- Fatigue
- Increased health problems

## Children Aged 10 and Over

### On returning from stay at father's

- Changes in behaviour. For instance, your child may go straight to his room without saying anything to you. Some mothers say they no longer recognize their children when they come back home
- Refusal to go to father's
- Anxiety

### Various consequences

- Lower marks at school and increased absenteeism
- Difficulty concentrating
- Angry with you because they have to go to their father's
- Criticize you for the way you deal with him (you get the impression that their father is speaking through them)
- May be aggressive with you

# I Think I May Need Support<sup>12,13</sup>

Ask yourself these questions about your ex-spouse, ex-lover or ex-partner.

- Does he cooperate fully with respect to custody rights and access to the children?
- Has he threatened to make you lose custody of your children?
- Does he consider you to be his property (for instance, is he obsessive, jealous or very controlling)?
- Do you feel you are in more danger since you began the separation process? Or since separation has become a reality?
- Does he harass you (for instance, follow you, keep you under surveillance, send you lots of faxes or e-mails, or call you on the phone repeatedly)?
- Does he make you fear for your safety or the safety of your children?
- Does he ignore agreements about how your children should be brought up (for instance, does he let them observe things or do things that you consider to be inappropriate)?
- Does he tell the children that you are the cause of the family break-up?
- Does he take advantage of his contact with the children to argue about the decisions you make, obtain information with a view to hindering your requests, exercising control, etc.?
- Has he threatened to harm you or kill you?
- Has he threatened to harm your children or kill your children?
- Does he use your child as a confidant to whom he can express emotions such as anger, sadness or rage that he feels toward you?

\* You can contact the resources listed on the following page for information and support.

YES / NO

<sup>10</sup> Rinfret-Raynor, M. et coll. (2007, juillet 6). Coping mechanisms and consequences for mother and child living in a domestic violence post-separation context. Présenté au 10ième congrès de psychologie tenu à Prague.

<sup>11</sup> Helping Children Thrive. (2004). Centre for Children and Families in the Justice System. Retrieved September 30, 2007, from <http://www.lfccc.on.ca/>.

<sup>12</sup> Conlin, T., et al. (2006). After she leaves: A training and resource manual for volunteers and staff supporting woman abuse survivors and their children during the family law process. London, Ontario: Luke's Place Support & Resource Centre for Women & Children, 119 p.

<sup>13</sup> Wuest, J., et al. (2003). Intrusion: The central problem for family health promotion among children and single mothers after leaving an abusive partner. Qualitative Health Research, 13(5): 597-622.



# Legal Aid

## LEGAL AID SERVICE

Anyone eligible for legal aid is entitled to a lawyer at no expense.

[www.avocat.qc.ca/public/iaaidejur.htm](http://www.avocat.qc.ca/public/iaaidejur.htm)

## COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE OF MONTREAL

Referrals to legal aid offices.

Telephone: 514-849-9488

## 9-1-1

### POLICE SERVICE

In crisis situations, when a person's safety is compromised or when the life of that person is in danger, 911 must be dialed.

# Psychosocial Assistance

## CAVAC

### CRIME VICTIMS ASSISTANCE CENTRE

CAVAC offices provide front-line, confidential services free of charge: post-trauma psychological, social and legal support services, information on rights and recourses, technical assistance, supportive care and attention, and referrals to specialized services.

Telephone: 1-866-532-2822

E-mail: [receptionniste@cavac-quebec.ca](mailto:receptionniste@cavac-quebec.ca)

## CÔTÉ COUR

### (HELP FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WHO MUST GO TO CRIMINAL COURT IN MONTREAL)

Psychosocial assessment to determine overall state of victim and her children, severity of spousal abuse and risks of it occurring again; information on criminal legal process, support during criminal legal proceedings, early detection of children exposed to spousal abuse, information on bail conditions imposed on the accused, etc.

Palais de justice de Montréal: 514-868-9577

Montreal municipal courthouse: 514-872-2964

## CSSS: HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES CENTRES (CLSC)

Info-Santé health line (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) provides medical and psychosocial services, psychosocial listening and support, information, assistance for drawing up a protection strategy, court-related support. Many CLSCs (local community service centres) offer individual and group therapy sessions for victims of domestic violence, as well as services for exposed children and for abusive spouses.

To find the CLSC closest to you, go to

[www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/reseau/rls](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/reseau/rls)

## WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Women's shelters provide a range of services at no charge. These include practical support services, such as meals and accommodation, as well as therapy, accompaniment and psychological, social and legal support services for mothers and their children. Regardless of the type of abuse experienced (physical, verbal, psychological, economic, spiritual or sexual), women of all languages and cultures and their children can find shelter in a nonviolent setting.

To obtain information about spousal violence or child abuse or to find a shelter, go to

[www.shelternet.ca](http://www.shelternet.ca)

Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale:

[www.maisons-femmes.qc.ca](http://www.maisons-femmes.qc.ca)

Fédération de ressources d'hébergement pour femmes violentées et en difficulté du Québec:

[www.fede.qc.ca](http://www.fede.qc.ca)

## S.O.S. VIOLENCE CONJUGALE

24-hour telephone help line for abused women, providing information, assessment and referrals to women's shelters.

From anywhere in Quebec: 1-800-363-9010

In Montreal: 514-873-9010

## 811

### INFO-SANTÉ HEALTH LINE

To reach Info-Santé, you can dial 811.

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