

Wondering about your relationship?

- Is your relationship a lot of work?
- Are you always fighting?
- Are you changing yourself to please your partner?
- Do you often feel like nothing you do is 'good enough' for your partner?
- Do you find yourself making excuses for the way your partner treats you?
- Do you feel afraid of your partner?
- Are you afraid that your relationship is negatively affecting your children?

If so, you may be in an abusive relationship.

What is abuse?

Abuse is any behaviour used to manipulate, force, dominate or isolate the other partner. Your partner may use any aspect of your identity to control you. He or she may use your age, race, class, culture, spirituality, ability, gender identity, sexual identity/ orientation, immigration status, body size appearance, or your HIV status.

Abuse crosses all social, ethnic, racial, religious and economic lines.

Partner abuse – between people of any gender identity – is a crime.

Acknowledgments

This edition of the “Loves Me, Loves Me Not” pamphlet was adapted from the original version developed in collaboration with members of the Coalition Against Same Sex Partner Abuse (CASSPA).

Funding was made possible for the original pamphlet through a grant to David Kelley Services, Family Service Toronto by the Ministry of the Attorney General, Ontario Victims Services Secretariat.

CASSPA would like to thank the community consultants on the original brochure including (and appearing in alphabetical order): Yasmeen Persad, Jake Pyne, Hershel Russell, and Kyle Scanlon.

Rainbow Health Ontario and David Kelley LGBTQ & HIV/AIDS Services/Family Service Toronto wish to acknowledge numerous other community members and service providers who contributed to the development of these materials, and the work of FORGE, from whom some of this material was adapted.

It's not easy to talk about abuse.

As trans people, we face discrimination and some of this may prevent us from admitting that abuse happens in our relationships. It can also be a barrier to seeking help when we are ready to talk to someone about it.

Some of us may have experienced abusive relationships with our families or friends when we were growing up and some of us might not have had much relationship experience to compare this current relationship to. This can make it harder to identify how we deserve to be treated. For everyone, it is confusing if controlling behaviour comes from someone we care about. (e.g., your partner wants to go everywhere with you to 'protect you' from transphobia you may encounter).

It can be scary to think about leaving the relationship we're in. We might have been told it will be hard to find another relationship. We might be afraid we will not find another person to love and desire us.

Trans people can and do have lasting relationships with loving partners. You deserve this too!

Community Resources

Assaulted Women's Helpline

A province-wide 24-hour helpline for women who have experienced abuse.

Telephone • 1.866.863.0511

TTY • 1.866.863.7868

www.awhl.org

Family Service Toronto

Resources on abuse in LGBTQ relationships.

www.familyservicetoronto.org/programs/dks/res_samesex.html

FORGE Transgender Sexual Violence Project

Trans-specific publications on sexual violence.

www.forge-forward.org/transviolence/publications.php

Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line

A toll-free Ontario-wide peer-support phone line for LGBT youth

1-800-268-9688 • www.youthline.ca

Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

A list of rape crisis/sexual assault centres across the province.

www.occcc.ca/centres.html

Ontario Network of Sexual Assault / Domestic Violence Treatment Centres

A province-wide network of hospital-based treatment centres that provide 24/7 emergency care to women, children and men.

www.satontario.com

Rainbow Health Ontario

A province-wide program providing LGBT health information, consultation, training, research and policy services.

www.RainbowHealthOntario.ca



A Program of Sherbourne Health Centre



Rainbow Health Ontario

To download or purchase go to www.rainbowhealthontario.ca

Loves Me, Loves Me Not



*A resource for trans people
who may be wondering about
their relationship.*

What does abuse look like?

Abusive partners make you feel bad about yourself. When we think we don't deserve any better, or we'll never find someone else, we can put ourselves in danger. Abusive partners often find ways to specifically use being trans against you. For example:

- Calling you by the wrong pronoun, 'it', or even 'freak';
- Telling you that you are not a 'real' man or woman;
- Telling you that no one would believe you because you're trans;
- Telling you how or how not to express your gender identity (clothes, hair, medical treatment);
- Making fun of your body; touching it in ways, or in places, you have asked them not to;
- Hiding or throwing away hormones, wigs, clothes, binders, packers, etc.;
- Threatening to 'out' you to friends, family, employers, or landlords;
- Not allowing you to join/participate in trans or other communities.

Abusive partners may also: Threaten to call immigration and have you deported; If you do sex work, threaten to call welfare to report you for not declaring your earnings.

Any aspect of your identity, like race, class and HIV status, can be used against you by your abusive partner to gain control.

Your partner might also:

- Kick, hit, slap, bite, punch, shove, scratch;
- Tell you where you can go and keep track of your every movement;
- Force you to have sex;
- Take your money;
- Get you hooked on drugs;
- Destroy your things;
- Threaten to harm your children or your pets.

Abuse is not your fault.

Without intervention, abuse will not stop.

The effects of abuse.

Abuse can affect your health. Effects may include:

- Physical injuries;
- Depression;
- Suicidal feelings;
- Anxiety or panic attacks;
- Flashbacks;
- Overwhelming feelings of anger, fear or shame.

What to do if you're being abused.

Getting help may be difficult. Domestic abuse and child welfare services are not always available or sensitive to trans people. If you don't get the help you need, don't give up.

Tell someone you trust who can help you come up with a plan. Seek professional help from a qualified counsellor who is trans-positive and knowledgeable about partner abuse. They can help you to explore your options and support you to make decisions. Trans community organizations may be able to help you find someone, although there may be a wait list.

Make a plan

Only you can decide what to do about your relationship - whether to stay or leave is your decision. However, it is important to develop a plan in case your safety and/or your children's safety is at risk. Make sure that your plan includes how to leave and how to stay safe after you have left. A plan may include:

- A safe place to stay; find out ahead of time if your local shelter accepts trans people and if so, what the specific acceptance policy is. You need to know where you're going to keep yourself safe.
- Emergency phone numbers;
- Putting aside some money or opening your own bank account;
- A bag of essentials, including extra hormones and syringes if you use these (Remember that your ID, visa, passport—even if they are not yet in your gender-appropriate name—are very important and hard to replace.) Keep these things hidden somewhere safe or with someone safe.

Fear of losing your children can make you stay. Know your legal rights involving your children. Being a good parent is more important to the court than being trans.

Leaving the relationship

If you leave, change your routine (your way to work, where you shop, when you have appointments). You may also want to have someone accompany you when you go out.

If your ex-partner continues to harass you after leaving the relationship, have your phone number(s) changed.

Consider reporting incidents of harassment or violence to the police. If you are unsure about this, discuss it with someone you trust who has knowledge about trans issues and the police and court system. Some police may not be responsive or sensitive, or may not take you seriously. Involving the police is scary but it is their job to protect you. Your legal name may be made public if charges are laid against your partner.

You may need medical attention, exams or testing following a physical or sexual assault. You have the right to refuse medical attention. A 'rape kit' is used to gather evidence, which can later be used to press charges. This needs to be done within 72 hours of an assault. You will be asked not to wash. If you refuse the kit, you can still receive medical care, including HIV prophylactics and/or the 'morning after pill'. (If you are a trans man who has not had a hysterectomy, or has not been on 'T' for more than three months, you may have to consider the possibility of pregnancy as a result of an assault.) Consider bringing a friend, community peer, family member or other advocate for support.

If you call the police and you have children, the police will contact the Children's Aid Society. Gender identity is not a child protection concern. The best way for your children to be happy is for you to be happy. Children need protection from chronic conflict and violence.

You have the right to live free from violence and fear.

