CULTURE
NO EXCUSE
FOR ABUSE
Men’s violence against women is unacceptable, no matter where you are and where you come from.
WELCOME

Family violence can affect anyone.
It happens in every community.

This booklet can help you if you are worried about yourself, your family, someone you know, or your community.

It is important we nurture our own cultural identities. But it is not OK to use our culture as an excuse for violence in our families.

This booklet is the first to be developed by Shakti with the It’s not OK Campaign to look at the specific issues facing ethnic communities in New Zealand.

It describes family violence and gives ideas about things we can all do to stop family violence.

Shakti works with Asian, African and Middle Eastern communities in New Zealand. Established in 1995, they provide culturally-competent domestic violence services and promote the rights of ethnic women and children.
WHAT IS FAMILY VIOLENCE?

A healthy family is supportive, trusting and safe. No one should be scared by someone in their family.

Family violence is:

- Partner abuse
- Child abuse and neglect
- Elder abuse and neglect
- Dating violence
- Violence in other family relationships

Children are always harmed by violence, even when it doesn’t happen in front of them.
USING INTIMIDATION
- Scaring her
- Destroying her property
- Being abusive to her friends and family
- Threatening to physically, sexually or psychologically harm her
- Giving her looks or acting "cold" towards her

USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
- Saying the abuse doesn’t happen or that it’s not serious
- Blaming her or saying she caused it
- Blaming the “Western” system
- Calling her crazy
- Telling people she’s “depressed/suicidal”

USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
- Treating her like a servant
- Putting traditions and culture ahead of women’s and children’s right to safety
- Influencing the community to pressure her to return or accept the abuse

USING CHILDREN
- Threatening to take the children to their country of origin or to harm them
- Forcing young girls into prostitution, early marriage, exchange of money/property or bonded labour
- Valuing male children above females

USING COERCION & THREATS
- Threatening to call immigration or Work and Income
- Threatening to destroy her passport and important documents
- Making her do illegal things or think that she is
- Threatening to leave her or harm her
- Threatening to withdraw her immigration status

USING MINIMIZING, DENYING & BLAMING
- Making her feel worthless (calling her names, making her eat in the kitchen)
- Telling her she’s acting like a “Kiwi/Western woman”
- Accusing her of being with other men
- Punishing her (keeping her family heirlooms)

USING ISOLATION
- Not letting her have or earn money or send money overseas
- Not giving her information about or a say in family finances
- Treating women and girls like property or to settle debts
- Abusing dowry system and threatening the family while bonding her in abusive marriage

USING MALE PRIVILEGE
- Controlling what she does, who she sees
- Denying her to express her individuality, opinion and beliefs
- Reading her mail and listening in on her telephone calls
- Taking away access to money and important documents

POWER AND CONTROL IN MIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

We all need to respect each other

**FAMILY VIOLENCE CAN BE:**

**Psychological:** threats, name calling, jealousy, put downs, smashing things, stalking, controlling what someone does, says and wears, forced marriage/child marriage, not letting someone see or contact their family or friends, screening someone’s mail, their texts or phone calls, not letting someone go out alone or to school, university or work, threats to deport someone

**Physical:** hitting, kicking, biting, pushing, strangulations, using weapons, throwing acid, female genital mutilation, being restrained
**Sexual:**
rape or any forced sexual activity, marital rape, unwanted touching, any sexual activity with someone under 16 years old

**Neglect:**
not providing food, shelter, heating or clothing, leaving children home alone, not getting medical attention or social services

**Financial:**
taking someone’s money, running up debts in their name, checking all receipts, pressuring someone to sign official papers (eg wills, immigration papers), dowry abuse

**Spiritual:**
stopping someone from expressing their spiritual or religious beliefs, forcing someone to go to church/temple/mosque, insulting or making fun of their beliefs or culture, forcing someone to eat food they don’t want to or wear something they don’t want to
FAMILY VIOLENCE IS A CRIME IN NEW ZEALAND
Family violence is a serious issue in New Zealand, but people want that to change.

The law says family violence can be physical, sexual, psychological, including threats and damage to property, and financial abuse.

Nobody has the right to physically hurt another person. This includes children.

Nobody is allowed to have sexual contact with another person without that person’s permission. Any sexual contact with someone under 16 years old is a crime.

It is illegal to marry if you are under 16 years old. It is illegal to force someone to marry.

Nobody has the right to use intimidation or threats to control another person.

The law protects people in many relationships including married couples, couples in civil unions, gay and lesbian couples, ex-partners, boyfriends and girlfriends, children and young people, flatmates and other people who share accommodation.

Police and other agencies take family violence seriously. They have people who can help. They can arrange for interpreters who speak your language. You do not have to leave your family to get help.
We need to value each other, no matter which country we come from.
CULTURE IS NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE

Here are some things people say to excuse violence:

- You have brought shame on our family.
- You have breached the honour of our family.
- Young people should obey their elders.
- You are too much like a New Zealander. You must respect the old ways.
- This is just the way we do things.
- All women/men/children in our culture must do this.

Wherever family violence happens, people have found ways to excuse it. But family violence is not OK in any culture.

“There are good cultural values but they can be twisted.”
Don’t let anyone take away your sense of dignity and freedom to express who you want to be.
WHAT CAN YOU DO?

We want all families to be safe and happy. If someone is in danger, call 111 for the Police, even if you are not sure.

IF YOU ARE LIVING WITH ABUSE

It is not your fault. You do not need to feel ashamed or embarrassed. Help is available.

There are things you can do to make it safer for yourself and your family.

Everyone can learn to express and manage their feelings without hurting others. There are services all over New Zealand that can help your family relationships be healthy and safe.

Talk to people you trust and ask for help. You could tell a friend, family member, workmate, teacher or carer, employer, health worker or a family violence helping service.

Help is free and confidential and you can call a helpline or service without giving your name. You can ask to speak to a woman doctor or Police officer.

Find out what services are available on page 18.

It is OK to ask for help.
IF YOU WANT TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE

If you know someone who is experiencing family violence, there is no shame in helping them.

You can:

- Tell them violence in the family is not OK, but it’s OK to ask for help
- Talk about the services available and how to contact them
- Support and encourage them to contact the services.

What you do and say can make a difference.

IF YOU ARE USING VIOLENCE

Everyone can learn to express and manage their feelings without hurting others.

Help is available for people who want to stop using violence or abuse.

To find out what services are available, go to page 18.
Things to try: listening, talking about violence and abuse, practical help, looking after children, being there, getting information.

If children are being hurt they need adults to help them. Don’t be afraid to offend an adult to keep a child safe.

Adults living with violence need support to make decisions in their own time when they are ready. It is important to go at their pace. Change can take a long time. Don’t give up.
Things can get better
IF YOU WANT CHANGE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If we are to stop family violence, we all need to take action – including making it OK to talk about it. We need community and faith leaders of all cultures to lead the way. Each community knows what will work for them. Towns, neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, neighbourhoods, faiths and sports clubs all over New Zealand are taking action to prevent family violence and to promote safe and healthy families.

You can:

• Collect information on family violence and distribute it
• Ask men to speak out against family violence
• Invite someone to speak to your group
• Ask for training on family violence
• Put information in your newsletters or on your community noticeboard
• Create posters for displays
• Make up your own slogans and put them on your letterhead
• Have a “safer families” stall at a family fun day or open day
• Find out what helping services are available
CONTACTS
AND MORE INFORMATION

If you need support, advice or if you need to talk to someone, these organisations can help you:

In an emergency call Police on **111**

Established since 1995, Shakti provides services for women, children, youth and families of Asian, African and Middle Eastern origin

**0800 742 584 (0800 SHAKTI)**

24-hour crisis line

Women’s Refuge **0800 733 843**

Child, Youth and Family Services **0508 326 459**

It’s not OK Information Line **0800 456 450**

Relationships Aotearoa **0800 725 283**

HELP sexual abuse services **09 623 1700**

Find out more at:

www.shakti.org.nz

www.areyouok.org.nz