

## EXPLORE THE FACTS ON "FAMILY VIOLENCE - THINK ABOUT IT"

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### 1. Violence is caused by alcohol and drugs.

There is a strong relationship between violence and the use of alcohol. **Alcohol is involved in over 40% of abusive situations.** It can change a person's moods and may affect the abuser's ability to understand the consequences of their actions. However, as in other criminal acts, alcohol use is not an acceptable excuse for violent behaviour.

### 2. It only happened once; it won't happen again.

The abuser after a violent episode often begs forgiveness and promises it will never happen again. **However the abuse usually continues and escalates.** Victims in this situation often feel increasingly powerless and hopeless as nothing they do seems to be able to stop the violence.

### 3. Abuse happens primarily in lower class families.

**Abuse can be found in all social and economic groups.** It is important that victims be accurately identified and offered confidential support, information and protection.

### 4. Women must condone the violence or they would leave.

There are many reasons why a woman might stay in or return to an abusive situation. Some of these may be:

- ▶ She believes children should have both parents and tries to keep the family together.
- ▶ If she leaves, the children are often lonely for their father, friends and school and try to persuade her to return.
- ▶ Friends and relatives who do not know the extent of the abusive situation, may try to persuade her to return.
- ▶ Her self-esteem and confidence in her ability to manage on her own is lowered by the continual abuse.
- ▶ Leaving often means a life of poverty for herself and her children. Her partner may refuse financial support for her and the children if they leave.
- ▶ Fear is a powerful reason why some women stay or return to a violent relationship. A partner may threaten her with violence, death or taking the children.

### 5. The children don't know what's going on.

**Children actually witness over 80% of assaults** and their lives are profoundly affected. Over time many children may begin to think of abuse as normal. Studies show that 40 - 60% of abusive men witnessed abuse or were beaten as children.

### 6. A small percentage of Canada's elderly suffer from abuse.

While still not widely recognized or discussed, it's estimated that **4% of Canada's elderly suffer some form of abuse.** Seniors are particularly vulnerable to financial abuse by family members including their spouse, children and grandchildren.

### 7. 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 10 boys will be abused before the age of 16.

The scope of violence against children is difficult to determine. The nature of the problem, its secrecy, shame, and legal sanctions means that many cases do not come to the attention of the authorities. Health Canada 1993/4 estimates suggest that 225,000 children have been abused and 25% of girls and 10% of boys are sexually abused before age 16.

### 8. Women can be just as abusive as men.

Women can be just as psychologically and emotionally abusive as men, however the physical assaults against women by men are more likely to result in injury, require medical attentions and hospitalization.

### 9. Mild shaking over a period of time can cause brain injury in a baby.

Brain injury can happen from: a few violent shakes; mild shaking over a period of time and swinging a child without supporting the head. Brain injury can result in seizures, blindness, mental retardation and death.