

If you are an

**elderly
woman,**

**this brochure
may be for you.**

Is this you?

- I'm at home and my spouse is working less, has stopped working, or plans to do so.
- I am working less, have stopped working, or have plans to do so.
- I have difficulty communicating in English or French.
- I don't see many people besides my spouse.
- I can't do all the things I used to.
- My income is low.
- I am increasingly dependent on my spouse.
- My spouse is increasingly dependent on me.
- I find it harder and harder to get around.
- My spouse finds it harder and harder to get around.



In this brochure, the word “spouse” indicates any person with whom you have or have had an intimate and committed relationship.

Is this someone you know?



I stay with my spouse because:

- I've lived with him for a long time.
- I need him or he needs me.
- I'm afraid of not having anyone to help me in my daily life.
- I love him and he loves me.
- Marriage is really important to me.

Do things like this happen to

My spouse:

- ✿ Puts me down and humiliates me in public.
- ✿ Reprimands me.
- ✿ Calls me crazy.
- ✿ Ridicules things I say or do.
- ✿ Threatens to send me back to my country of origin.
- ✿ Won't let anyone help me.
- ✿ Breaks or threatens to break objects I like or need, such as my glasses.
- ✿ Always wants to know where I am.
- ✿ Is constantly contacting me by phone, text, or email, or following me around even though we are no longer together.
- ✿ Criticizes my friends or loved ones.

YES?

These behaviours are all

This brochure

you?

Have you seen them happen to someone else?

My spouse:

- Controls my spending or won't give me money.
- Threatens to put me in a home or deprive me of care.
- Pushes, slaps, pinches, chokes, burns, or kicks me.
- Threatens to hurt my pets.
- Monitors my communications.
- Threatens to hurt or kill me or my loved ones.
- Forces me to have sex or engage in unwanted sexual behaviour.

examples of domestic violence.

is for you.

Domestic violence and insidiously undermines intimate

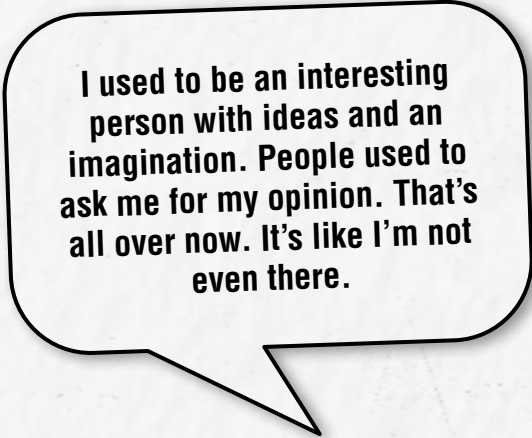
Your spouse repeatedly says and does things that hurt you.

He tells you what to do. He demands obedience and makes all your decisions for you. His goal is to control you and have power over you.

To keep you from leaving, he promises to change but continues to humiliate you and be violent.

To control you, your spouse makes you doubt yourself and tries to confuse you by saying things are your fault or that you are violent.

To dominate you, your spouse is verbally and physically violent.



I used to be an interesting person with ideas and an imagination. People used to ask me for my opinion. That's all over now. It's like I'm not even there.

Domestic violence
Time, love, or

starts gradually and committed relationships



**Domestic violence
can occur in
heterosexual or
same-sex couples.**



**doesn't stop by itself.
old age won't stop it either.**

A violent spouse looks like any other man and may hold a respectable position in society.

He may be well liked and nice with everyone else.

He does not necessarily have mental health, alcohol, money, or work-related problems.

He may come from anywhere in the world and may practise any religion or none at all.

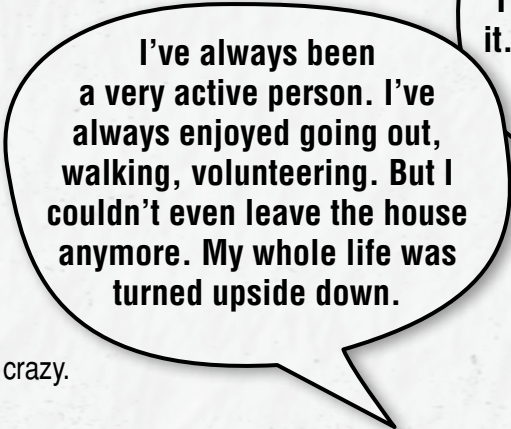
Domestic violence beatings and

Psychological violence is less visible, but just as devastating.

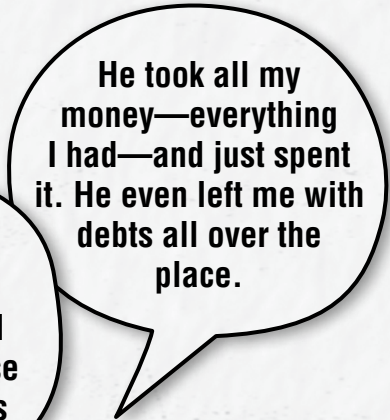
- Being repeatedly put down, called crazy, or ridiculed about your body or sexuality.
- Having your movements controlled.
- Being prevented from seeing your friends or loved ones.
- Being threatened with institutionalization.

These are forms of domestic violence.

Psychological violence destroys your self-esteem.
You end up believing what your spouse says. You feel stupid or crazy.
You think you are the one to blame.

A black speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom right.

**I've always been
a very active person. I've
always enjoyed going out,
walking, volunteering. But I
couldn't even leave the house
anymore. My whole life was
turned upside down.**

A black speech bubble with a tail pointing towards the bottom left.

**He took all my
money—everything
I had—and just spent
it. He even left me with
debts all over the
place.**

is not just physical injury

**Economic violence is less well known,
but just as humiliating.**

- Having to beg for money.
- Having your spending controlled.
- Being forced to pay for everything.
- Having your money stolen from you.

These are also forms of domestic violence.

**Repeated spousal neglect might
seem unintentional, but it isn't.**

- Being forced to wait to go to the bathroom or for other urgent needs.
- Being deprived of your medications or being overmedicated.
- Being left for long periods in uncomfortable situations, on the toilet, for example.

These, too, are forms of domestic violence.

**If you experience psychological
or economic violence or are a
victim of neglect, ask for help.**

**See the last page
for organizations that help
elderly women who experience
domestic violence.**

Among all some are

- **Threats**

Such as threats to harm or kill you, your children or grandchildren.

- **Physical violence**

Such as arm twisting or hitting.

- **Criminal negligence**

Such as being deprived of care or food to the point where your life is at risk.

- **Sexual violence**

Such as being forced to engage in sexual relations or unwanted sexual behaviour.

- **Harassment**

Such as being constantly phoned or followed so that you fear for your safety.

- **Forcible confinement**

Such as being locked in a room or prevented from leaving the house.

If you experience any of these forms of violence, you can call 911 to report it and get protection.

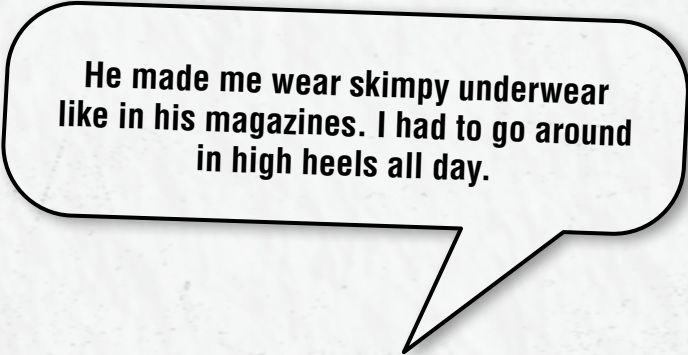
**You have a right
to security and respect.**

**These rights are guaranteed by the Québec
Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, and
the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.**

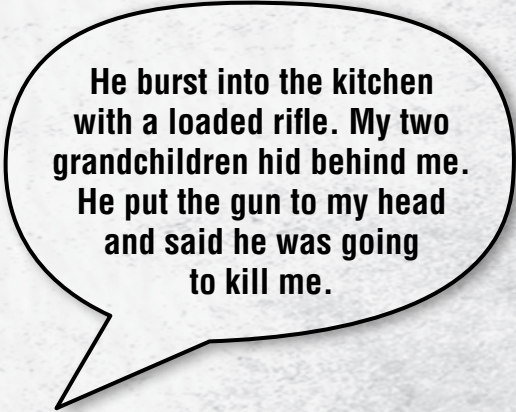
forms of violence considered crimes

Over time, forms of violence may evolve and add to one another.

Over time, the frequency and severity of violence can increase.



He made me wear skimpy underwear like in his magazines. I had to go around in high heels all day.



He burst into the kitchen with a loaded rifle. My two grandchildren hid behind me. He put the gun to my head and said he was going to kill me.

Here are some that might make you

- I don't want to face this alone anymore.
- It would be a relief just to talk to someone.
- I want to live peacefully and think of my own needs for the years I have left.
- I want to get my confidence and self-esteem back. I want to stop feeling guilty and ashamed.
- I need care for my physical and mental welfare.
- I want to find a way out.
- I want to find ways to protect myself, like arranging a signal to send to someone I trust to call 911 in an emergency.
- I want to stay alive.

**If your safety or the safety
don't hesitate**

of the reasons decide to seek help

I couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to be like everybody else. See my grandchildren without having him come and humiliate me in front of them. Go out with my daughter whenever I wanted, like an ordinary mother. Go see a friend who he wouldn't let me see. I just wanted an ordinary life.

of your loved ones is **threatened**,
to call 911.

responsible for his violent

nt behaviour.

Don't face it alone.

Talk to someone you trust.

**Even if you confide in someone,
you still have the right to make your own choices.**

**No one can force you
to leave your spouse or stay with him.**

Do you know an elderly woman who If she trusts you,

Listen without judging

Believe her

Elderly women may have trouble confiding in another person or revealing domestic violence for a number of reasons.

They may be:

- Afraid of being judged
- Ashamed to talk about a problem they see as private
- Afraid the violence will continue or get worse
- Afraid of what might happen to their spouse

It takes a lot of courage to talk. The best way to help is to listen without judging and try to understand the obstacles she faces.

is experiencing domestic violence? you can help

Tell her it's not her fault

The traditional role of wife and mother has had an especially strong impact on the lives of elderly women. Most of them have considered themselves the main guardian of the family unit, responsible for taking care of their spouse and children. Many feel guilty at the thought of leaving their spouse. They feel it would be disloyal or that they would be breaking up the family.

Victims often feel responsible for their spouse's violent behaviour. Violent spouses are often experts at blaming the victim and denying their own violent behaviour.

Tell the victim that it's her spouse who is responsible for his violent actions.

It's his violent behaviour that is breaking up the family.

Respect her choices and let her go at her own pace

Domestic violence is devastating. The road to restoring self-confidence and taking back control of one's life can be long.

Here are some things that can lead an elderly woman to tolerate violence:

- The hope of restoring a loving relationship
- The fear that her income won't be enough to meet her needs
- The fear of being abandoned and left without care if her spouse is her main caregiver
- The fear of being put in a nursing home if she asks for help
- Ignorance of her rights or of the resources available

Try to understand her experience and respect her choices. Whether she leaves her spouse or not, you can point her toward specialized resources to help her understand her situation better. (See the last page of this brochure.)

Support her

Isolation plays a big part in domestic violence. Such isolation is often more acute among elderly women because it has grown up over a long time. Their children may have cut ties, perhaps because they did not want to take sides. It's harder to find a solution when you're alone and don't know what kind of help is available. This is what many elderly women face.

Offer the victim your support. Talk with her. Let her know she has the right to confidential assistance. If she wants to know more, show her this brochure. If she wishes, offer to go with her when she seeks help.

Fight prejudice

Society promotes many stereotypes about elderly couples. They're supposed to live happy, peaceful lives. But violence may have been going on for a long time or may appear in old age. Once it's taken root, it won't disappear as the couple ages. Time often just makes it worse.

And remember that elderly people are still sexually active. They can experience sexual violence too.

The more isolated the victim, the more abusive her spouse can be. Be open, and above all, don't turn your back on her.

**Remember, domestic violence
feeds on indifference...**

RESOURCES
CALL FROM ANYWHERE
IN QUÉBEC
24 HOURS A DAY,
7 DAYS A WEEK

SOS domestic violence
1-800-363-9010

(calls from outside Montréal) (Voice and TTY)

514-873-9010

(in Montréal) (Voice and TTY)

SOS domestic violence knows where
elderly women can find help.

This free, confidential, and anonymous telephone service specializes in domestic violence. With one call, victims, their loved ones, and witnesses can **immediately** get information, counselling, and accommodation services.

Produced by the **Secrétariat à la condition féminine**.
Written by the **Table de concertation en violence conjugale de Montréal**,
with the **collaboration of:**

- Ressources ethnoculturelles contre l'abus envers les aîné(e)s
- The CSSS Cavendish Elder Abuse Consultation Centre
- Lyse Montminy, Université de Montréal/École de service social and member of CRI VIFF
- Marie Beaulieu, Ph. D., Université de Sherbrooke research chair on the abuse of seniors

Legal deposit: 2012

Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec
Library and Archives Canada

ISBN: 978-2-550-65497-1 (printed version)

978-2-550-65498-8 (electronic version)

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911 Emergency services

For immediate assistance if you are in danger
or are a witness to violence.

911 (Voice) (TTY available in some regions)

310-4141 (in municipalities where 911 is not available)

***4141** (for cell phone calls)

Info-Santé

For information and referrals, such as CLSCs and other health
and social services centres (CSSSs)

811 (Voice)

This brochure is available in French, English and Spanish.
Please contact the Secrétariat à la condition féminine (SCF)
at **418-643-9052**.

These brochures are also available on the SCF (www.scf.gouv.qc.ca) and the Table de concertation en violence conjugale de Montréal (www.tcvcm.ca) websites in PDF or Word format in English, French and Spanish. They can be found on the SCF website under the Publications tab.