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## **What is Domestic Violence?**

Have you ever felt fear? Real fear. Have you ever been afraid of someone who is close to you? Afraid of someone who shares your home, your bed, your life? This is the real-life nightmare for countless women in Ireland who are experiencing domestic violence.

Almost 1 in 5 Irish Women have experienced Domestic Violence by a current or former intimate partner or husband (Making the Links, 1995). And that's just the reported cases. It is likely that we all know someone who has suffered this cruel treatment. It's also likely that she hasn't felt able to tell us.

Domestic Violence affects Children. Research shows that children are often present when violence is taking place (Making the Links, 1995). A high percentage of men who abuse women also abuse children (Women and Children at Risk: A Feminist Perspective on Child Abuse, 1988). Violence often occurs during pregnancy and actual or threatened miscarriage can occur (Making the Links, 1995).

Domestic Violence occurs in every Social and Economic grouping of Society. There is no "type" of woman to whom it occurs, and there is no "type" of home in which it happens. Sadly, domestic violence is a feature of contemporary Irish family life.

Domestic Violence is not only Physical Violence. Sexual abuse, mental abuse and financial abuse are as common, as terrifying, and as damaging as physical abuse. But they are harder to see and may be more difficult for women to name. Many women are subjected to multiple forms of abuse at the same time.

## **What is Domestic Violence?**

**Physical Abuse:** Being punched, hit, shoved, kicked, beaten, assaulted with or without weapons; Choking and Strangulation; Being stabbed.

**Sexual Abuse:** Rape; Being forced to take part in any kind of sexual act which you do not want to; Being exposed to sexually explicit material against your will; Being denied access to contraception.

**Mental Abuse:** Threats (including to kill); Damage to property/pets; Being shouted at; Intimidation; Being denied access to finances; Having your freedom controlled