

Front panel ...

The face of family violence might not be the one you think

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BC INSTITUTE ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

Do you see the face of a victim as a woman's, or think of abusers as men?

Think again.

The face of violence might sport a beard or wear makeup. It could be wrinkled or baby smooth. Victims can look happy. Abusers often smile. Pain can sting without a slap.

SPOUSAL ABUSE Abusive partners lash out physically, sexually, emotionally and financially. Emotional abuse erodes self-esteem. Financial control paralyzes victims. Threats make powerful weapons.

Women are most likely to be the victims in heterosexual relationships. Both abused women and men rarely seek help.

Same-sex partners are as likely to form abusive relationships as heterosexual partners. For them, social prejudice can create additional stress.

When parents get hurt, children often feel frightened and ashamed. They can suffer severe and lasting trauma and grow up thinking it's normal to hurt or be hurt. Daughters may choose violent partners while sons may repeat their fathers' actions. And the cycle of violence continues.

Their children grown, some older women try to leave their abusers. But few services address their unique needs. And, for most, financial choices no longer exist.

DATING VIOLENCE Young love is not always romantic. One partner might think strength means coercion while the other confuses pleasing with submitting. These first relationships can initiate destructive patterns of behaviour and leave life-long scars.

Young love is not always romantic

CHILD ABUSE Physical punishment is abuse. Verbal attacks are emotional abuse. Failure to provide food, shelter, medical attention or supervision is abuse by neglect. Failure to provide attention or affection is emotional neglect.

Any time an older child, adolescent or adult acts on sexual impulses with a younger child or adolescent, sexual abuse occurs. This includes fondling, exposure and sexual talk.

ABUSE OF THE DISABLED Disability increases vulnerability. Dependent on caregivers, people with disabilities may experience everything from neglect and rough handling to physical, sexual and verbal assault. Skeptical responses to their pleas for help compound their suffering.

ELDER ABUSE Adult children, caregivers and partners sometimes abuse older people physically, sexually and emotionally. Caregivers may deny food, medical care, clothing, shelter or social contact, or exploit seniors financially. Financial abuse includes denying access to bank accounts or persuading a senior to sign over money, property or possessions.

Like disability, the frailty of age increases vulnerability. In the ultimate assault, those who should listen to elders frequently dismiss them as senile.

But elder abuse is often a sin of omission.

Admitted to care facilities, many seniors spend their "golden" years in solitude. Attended by strangers, forgotten by family and friends — it's not much of a life.

Pain can sting without a slap

"Intimidation can be an abuser's most powerful weapon."

What is the BC Institute on Family Violence?

Founded in 1989, the BC Institute on Family Violence is a private, non-profit organization. Our purpose is to eliminate family violence. We wage our campaign by:

- providing information and referrals to the general public and individuals affected by family violence
- delivering education to professionals
- helping organizations develop policies related to family violence
- sharing information and helping other organizations develop, provide and evaluate services and programs
- planning, initiating and conducting research
- presenting briefs to government on pertinent issues

our role

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Because knowledge is power, we focus on research and education.

We have **produced** publications or videos on

- family homicides in BC
- criminal harassment (stalking)
- the court process, for battered women
- aboriginal social problems
- elder abuse, for health-care personnel
- programs for assaultive men.

We have **developed**

- a spousal-assault risk assessment
- guidelines and standards for treatment of offenders
- training materials for professionals
- literature reviews about children who witness violence, custody/access issues and adult survivors of sexual abuse.

We have **organized** two national conferences on family violence and **presented** briefs for government on firearms legislation, policing in the community and the role of government agencies in child protection.

We **provide**

- referrals for those requiring services
- workshops on family violence
- answers to media questions
- a quarterly newsletter for professionals and other interested parties.

We **operate** the BCIFV Resource Centre, a comprehensive library including books, periodicals, videos and statistics materials describing all aspects of family violence, including multicultural and aboriginal perspectives.

Information on prevention programs, services for survivors and treatment for offenders. In exchange for a \$40 annual membership, the Centre circulates materials throughout BC. It's also open, at no cost, for on-site research or to view videos weekdays between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, and to provide ongoing information throughout the province by fax, mail and telephone.

How do we end family violence? We just start.

A problem of such daunting dimensions makes it tempting to walk away. But at the BC Institute on Family Violence, we believe every problem has a solution if we tackle it one step at a time.

Take a step. Read an article or a book. Visit our Resource Centre or call us. Make a donation or become a volunteer at the Institute or one of the many anti-violence organizations in BC. (We can give you a list.)

Start by doing whatever feels right. But start.

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All donations are tax deductible. Charitable # 086786-59

For more information on family violence or our work, please contact us:

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