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## Relationship support services

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### Summary

- Get in early. Prevention is always better than cure.
  - All couples face problems and challenges in their relationships.
  - There is a range of relationship support services available.
  - If you are experiencing abuse or violence, seek help immediately.
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### About relationship support

While all couples want to have a successful and rewarding relationship, going through periods of difficulty and challenge are also normal parts of sharing your life with others. The way we deal with these challenges will affect our relationships both in the short and long term. Sometimes, it can be difficult to talk to your partner about an issue, so you may need some outside help to resolve problems and ensure your relationship stays healthy and strong.

### Signs of a relationship in need of support

Being aware of the early warning signs of relationship breakdown and being prepared to act can help you resolve conflict. Early warning signs of problems in a relationship include:

- no longer doing things together – living parallel lives
- recurring arguments that are never resolved
- feeling dissatisfied and unhappy
- being preoccupied with interests outside the relationship, leading to one partner feeling neglected
- complaining of loss of feelings for each other
- becoming emotionally or sexually involved with someone outside the relationship (if this is not an agreed part of your relationship)
- feeling tired and less able to meet responsibilities at work
- arguments over parenting or family issues
- arguments over money.

Warning signs that a relationship is becoming unhealthy or abusive, include:

- **constant jealousy** – you partner questioning whom you are talking to, accusing you of flirting or spending too much time with others. Your partner may frequently call, drop by to check what you are doing or track your movements
  - **controlling behaviour** – where your partner may control finances, decision-making and whom you can see and speak to
  - **unrealistic expectations** – where your partner expects you to meet all their needs, for you to take care of everything emotionally and domestically
  - **contempt** – where your partner acts as though (and thinks that) they are better than you. They may constantly put you down and ridicule you in private or in front of other people
  - **blame** – where you are blamed for any problems that occur or for making your partner feel a certain way
  - **verbal abuse** – where your partner says things that are cruel and hurtful, shouting, degrading you and your accomplishments
  - **threats of violence** – where your partner threatens the use of physical force that is meant to control you
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- **physical violence** – including any physical harm from pushing, hitting, punching, biting, strangulation or any other form of violence.

If you identify with these signs please get support immediately from the service providers listed on this page.

### Professional help for relationship issues

If your relationship has some of the early warning signs, it's time to seek advice. The sooner you act on issues, the easier they will be to resolve. Some relationships involve violence, controlling behaviour and abuse. If you suffer any form of violence, seek help immediately.

### Types of support and assistance available

A variety of relationship support services are available through specialised counselling agencies and through private providers, including:

- **counsellors** – can help you sort out what the problems are and identify ways to mend your relationship. Counselling programs also help people who are separating to deal with their grief and anger and move on with their lives
- **family mediators** – are helpful when couples have decided to separate. They help separating couples to make choices and plans regarding children, property and finance. They provide a supportive environment and help people talk to each other to sort out the issues, come up with acceptable solutions and make mutually satisfactory agreements
- **sexual advice services** – specialist counselling services are available for people who wish to address their sexual concerns
- **relationship check-up services** – help couples explore and strengthen their relationship and prepare for the future together – for example, pre-marriage and pre-parenthood courses
- **relationship skills courses** – courses and seminars to help people learn relationship skills, get support, and explore similar experiences and responses with others. Courses are aimed at couples who intend to marry or live together, as well as those in established relationships
- **parenting skills courses** – family skills courses for parents of young children and teenagers are designed to improve family life and to help parents feel more confident about their parenting
- **telephone counselling** – **Relationships Australia** (Tel. **1800 817 569**, freecall) provides counselling over the phone for Victorians who are isolated geographically or due to physical or other circumstances
- **online counselling** – there is a range of different online counselling methods that can provide convenient access to services without having to attend a service location. Online counselling services can include web chat in real time, video counselling, emailing with a counsellor, web seminars, information courses and interactive websites. Most support agencies have a website which outlines their services and contact details
- **family violence interventions** – services to assist those experiencing violence or abuse in their relationships include:
  - counselling for couples at risk of violence
  - assistance to secure the safety of victims of family violence (including calling 000 for police intervention and support)
  - therapy for people who are abusive and violent in their relationships
- **separation courses** – can help people who have separated move forward, and can also help children deal with their feelings and experiences when their parents separate
- **lifestyle transition courses** – aimed at different life stages, such as looking after your relationship when you become a parent, leaving the workforce, or getting back in touch with each other when the children have left home
- **stepfamily support** – family counsellors can help people adjust to living as a stepfamily
- **gambling support services** – free, confidential counselling services are available for problem gamblers, partners and family members. Individual and group sessions are available
- **alcohol and other drug support services** – free, confidential counselling services are available for people with alcohol and other drug problems, their partners and family members
- **counselling provided by employers** – some organisations offer programs for employees who are finding

that their personal problems are interfering with their job performance. These programs can involve a wide range of services, depending on the needs of the employee and their family

- **children's contact services** – this service provides safe and positive contact arrangements for children whose parents are separated.

### Where to get help

- **Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA)** National Register (Family and Relationship Therapy) Tel. **(03) 9486 3077**
- **Relationships Australia** provides counselling, mediation, dispute resolution, relationship and parenting skills education, community support, employee assistance programs and professional training. Services and programs are available nationally Tel. **1300 364 277**
- **1800 RESPECT** is the national sexual assault and family violence counselling service for people living in Australia Tel. **1800 737 732**
- **Beyond Blue** is an independent not-for-profit organisation that provides telephone and online support for depression, anxiety, and related disorders, as well as online resources and information Tel. **1300 22 4636**
- **Counselling Online** offers free online alcohol and other drug counselling
- **DirectLine** offers confidential counselling for people of all ages and backgrounds who are affected by alcohol or drugs Tel. **1800 888 236**
- **Family Relationship Advice Line**, Australian Government Tel. **1800 050 321**
- **Family Drug Help** family drug and gambling help, information and support Tel. **1300 660 068**
- **Gambling Help Online** provides free, anonymous, 24/7 online support, telephone support, self-help tools and information for identifying and dealing with problem gambling Tel. **1800 858 858**
- **Men's Referral Service** is a free, confidential telephone helpline that offers counselling, advice and support to men who have anger, relationship or parenting issues Tel. **1300 766 491**
- **MensLine Australia** provides national telephone and online support, information and referrals for men with family and relationship concerns Tel. **1300 78 99 78**
- **QLife** provides telephone and online support to help lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex communities work towards better health, including mental health Tel. **1800 184 527**
- **safe steps** Family Violence Response Centre Tel. **1800 015 188**
- **Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE)** free support, referral and information for all Victorian women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people Tel. **1300 134 130**

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Relationships Australia Victoria

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