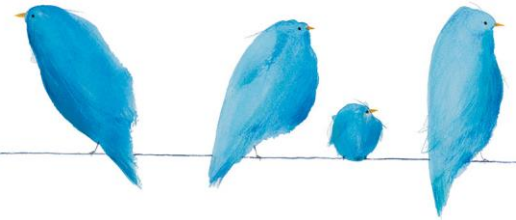


Asking about violence

Updated 30 March 2019



Here are some **framing statements** you can make to raise the subject of violence before asking direct questions.

- Many women experience problems with their husband or partner, or someone else they live with.
- I have seen women many women who have been experiencing violence at home.
- We know that family violence is common and that it impacts the health of our patients so I routinely ask about relationship safety.
- We often ask people about how safe they feel at home and in their relationships, as that's important to their overall health.
- Sometimes when there are repeated visits for a similar condition, we think about things in the home that might be contributing such as relationship violence.

Here are some **simple and direct questions** that will show that you want to hear about the patient's problems.

- Are you ever afraid of someone in your family or household? If so who?
- Has someone in your family or household ever put you down, humiliated you or tried to control what you can or cannot do?
- Has someone in your family or household ever threatened to hurt you or physically harm you in some way? If so, what happened?
- Has someone in your family or household ever pushed, hit, kicked, punched or otherwise hurt you?
- Are you worried about your children or someone else in your family or household?
- Has someone in your family or household ever bullied or insulted you?
- Has someone in your family or household ever tried to control you, for example not letting you have money or go out of the house?
- Has someone in your family or household ever forced you to have sex or participate in a sexual activity you did not want?
- Would you like help with any of this now?

If the patient answers 'yes' to any of these questions, **offer them first line support** which responds to both emotional and practical needs at the same time. **Remember, this may be your only opportunity to help this patient.**

The letters of the word **LIVES** can remind you of the five tasks that protect lives.

- **Listen** – Listen closely, with empathy and without judging
- **Inquire about needs and concerns** – Assess and respond to various needs and concerns – emotional, physical and practical e.g. childcare
- **Validate** – Show that you understand and believe. Assure them they are not to blame.
- **Enhance safety** – Discuss a plan to protect themselves from further harm if violence occurs again.
- **Support** – Support them by helping them to connect to information, services and social support.





What to do if you suspect violence, but the patient does not disclose

- Do not pressure them, and give them time to decide what they want to tell you
- Tell them about services that are available if they choose to use them
- Offer information on the effects of family violence on their health
- Offer a follow up visit.

Reference: World Health Organisation *Clinical Handbook Health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence*