

**If you are an
immigrant woman
or a woman from
an ethnocultural
community,**

**this brochure
may be for you.**

Is this you?

- ✿ I am an immigrant.
- ✿ I have permanent resident status.
- ✿ I am a Canadian citizen.
- ✿ I belong to an ethnocultural community (for example, Greek, Guinean, or Vietnamese).
- ✿ I am a member of a visible minority (for example, I am a Canadian of Haitian or Chinese origin).
- ✿ I am entirely dependent on my children or spouse because I do not speak French or English.
- ✿ I feel isolated. I rarely or never go out. I see few people apart from my spouse and children.
- ✿ I have little education.
- ✿ It is very difficult for me to find work because my education and experience are not recognized.
- ✿ I have a job I am overqualified for and that is poorly paid.
- ✿ I find it difficult to communicate in French or English.



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 love him and he loves me.
- Marriage is very important to me.
- I am afraid of being rejected by my community, my family, or my spouse's family if I leave, and of how that rejection will affect me.
- I have no money and I'm afraid of being homeless.
- I am afraid he will take revenge.
- I don't know what resources are available to help me. I don't know my rights.
- He's the only person I know in Canada.
- I don't want doctors, police, government workers, or judges interfering in my private life.

Do things like this happen to

My spouse:

- ✱ Puts me down and humiliates me in front of my children or family, says I'm crazy, or reprimands me.
- ✱ Makes fun of me, ridicules things that I say or do, or makes me feel ashamed.
- ✱ Says I am a bad mother.
- ✱ Threatens to send me back to my country of origin.
- ✱ Threatens to hurt people I love or take away my children.
- ✱ Breaks or threatens to break objects I like or to take away things I need, like the phone or computer that I use to communicate with my family.
- ✱ Always wants to know where I am and who I am with.
- ✱ Criticizes my family and friends.
- ✱ Is constantly contacting me by phone, text, or email, or following me around even though we are no longer together.

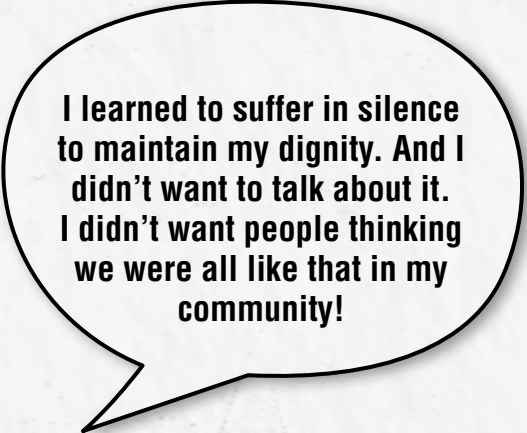
YES?

These behaviours are all

This brochure

you?

Have you seen them happen to someone else?



I learned to suffer in silence to maintain my dignity. And I didn't want to talk about it. I didn't want people thinking we were all like that in my community!

examples of domestic violence.

is for you.

My spouse:

- ✿ Threatens to ruin my reputation.
- ✿ Uses crude language when talking to me, raises his voice, or makes threatening gestures.
- ✿ Pushes, slaps, pinches, chokes, burns, or kicks me, or pulls my hair or spits on me.
- ✿ Threatens to hurt or kill me.
- ✿ Forces me to have sexual or intimate relations against my will or threatens to go to prostitutes.
- ✿ Forces me to have children.
- ✿ Controls my spending or spends all my money.
- ✿ Treats me like his slave.
- ✿ Threatens to kill himself, me, or my children.

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. He 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.

When we first came to Canada, he would slap me sometimes. I put this down to nerves because he had so much to deal with. When I suggested that I get a job so I could help out, he said I was no good for anything anyway. As time passed, it got worse. Now I'm all alone, and I'm more and more afraid of him.

Domestic violence
Time, love, or better

starts gradually and committed relationships



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

**doesn't stop by itself.
living conditions 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 can be from any community and practise any religion or none at all. This includes native-born Quebecers.

Domestic violence

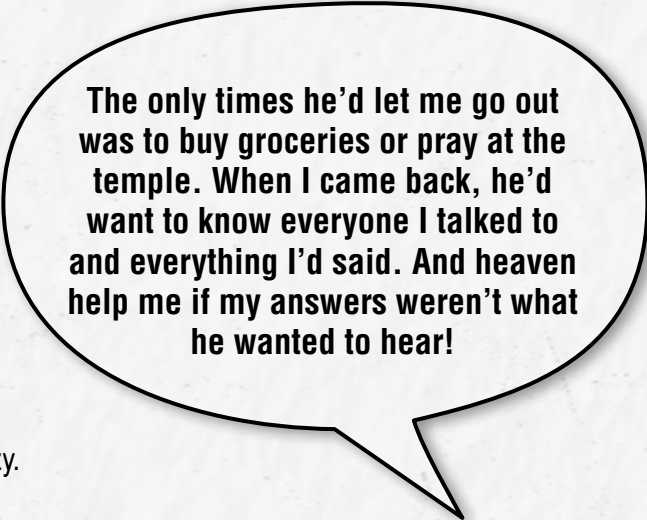
beatings and

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.
- Having your beliefs or spirituality infringed on.
- Being prevented from studying or learning French or English.

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.



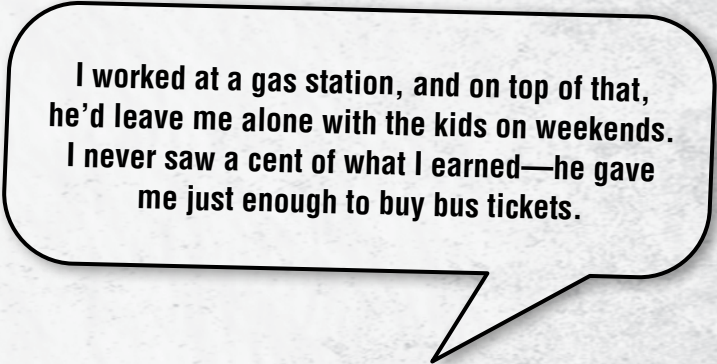
The only times he'd let me go out was to buy groceries or pray at the temple. When I came back, he'd want to know everyone I talked to and everything I'd said. And heaven help me if my answers weren't what he wanted to hear!

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.
- Being forced to hand over all your money.
- Being prevented from getting a job.
- Having to go into debt.

These are also forms of domestic violence.



I worked at a gas station, and on top of that,
he'd leave me alone with the kids on weekends.
I never saw a cent of what I earned—he gave
me just enough to buy bus tickets.

**If you experience psychological or
economic violence, ask for help.**

**See the last page for
organizations that help immigrant
women or women from
ethnocultural communities who
experience domestic violence.**

Among all some are

- **Threats**
Such as threats to harm or kill you.
- **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.

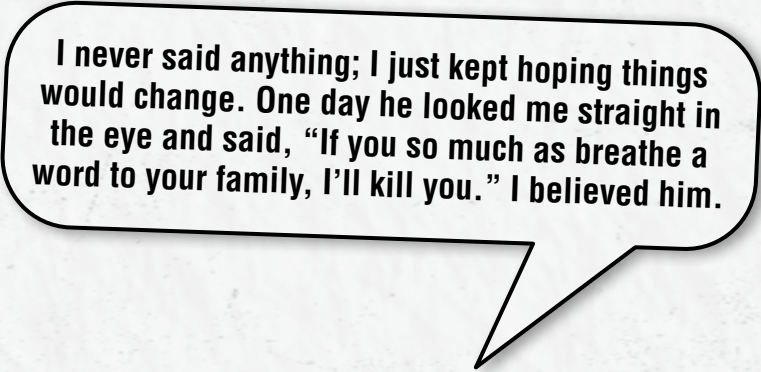
**You have a right
to security and respect.**

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

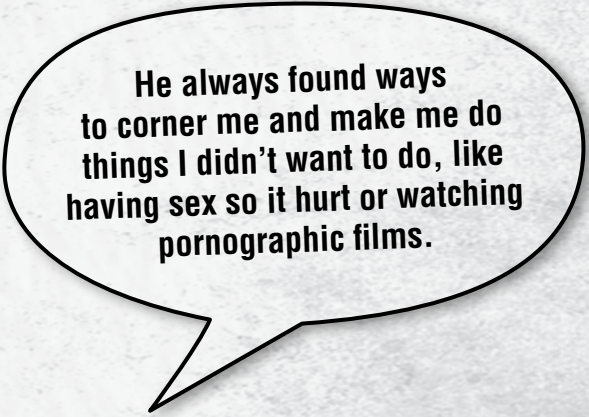
forms of violence considered crimes

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

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



I never said anything; I just kept hoping things would change. One day he looked me straight in the eye and said, "If you so much as breathe a word to your family, I'll kill you." I believed him.



He always found ways to corner me and make me do things I didn't want to do, like having sex so it hurt or watching pornographic films.

Here are some that might make you

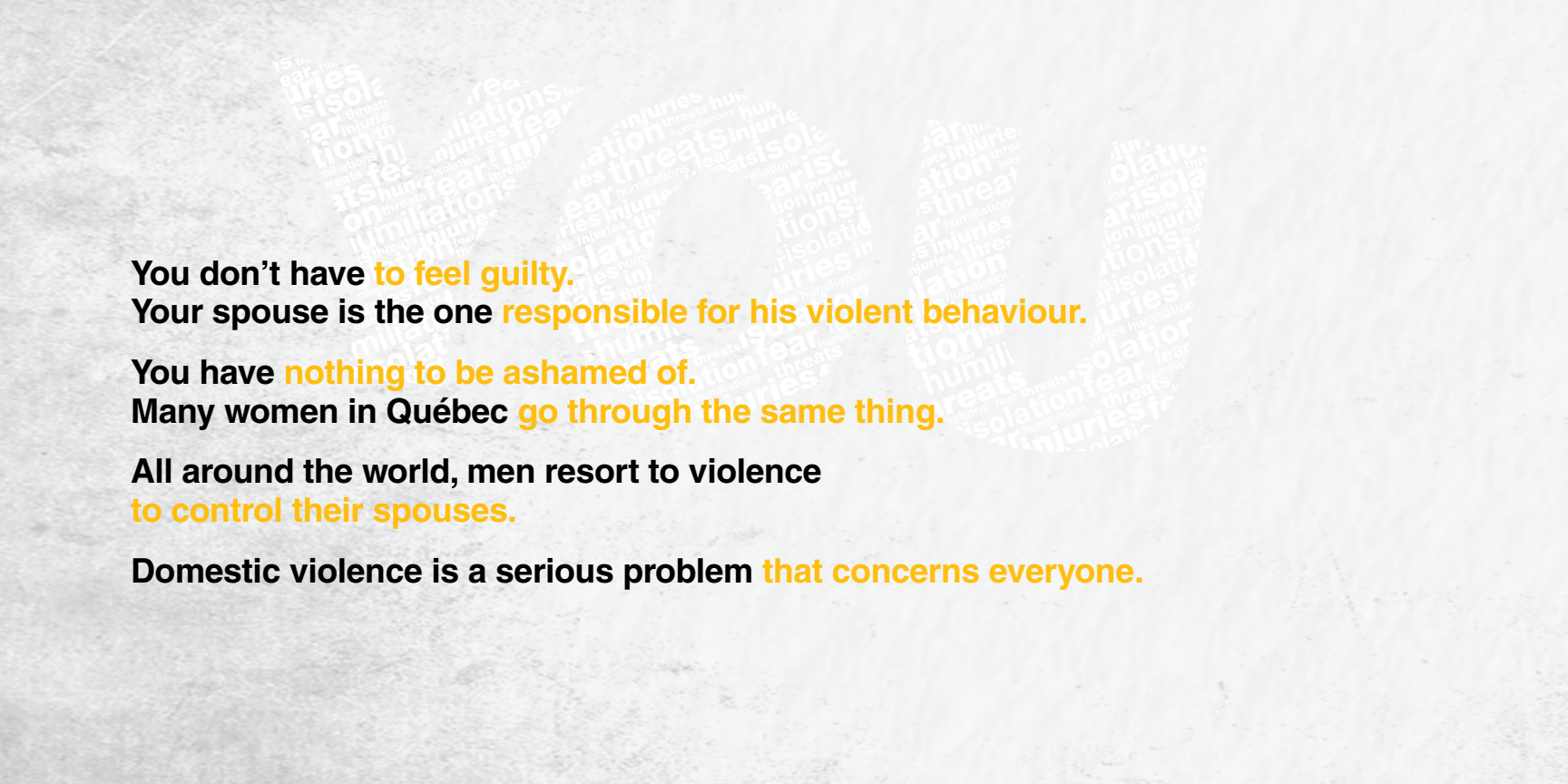
- ☀ I do not want to face this alone. I need help.
- ☀ I want myself and my children to be safe.
- ☀ I need to feel respected.
- ☀ I need to talk, to relieve stress.
- ☀ I want to know my rights and find out what help is available.
- ☀ I want a peaceful life with my children.
- ☀ I want to get my confidence and self-esteem back. I want to stop feeling guilty and ashamed.
- ☀ 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 myself and my children to stay alive.

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

of the reasons decide to seek help

All I wanted was for them to be safe. Then one day, I noticed the terrible sadness in my eldest son's eyes. It was a shock. I had never realized that my kids were suffering just like me. They had learned to endure this nightmare in silence. Just like me.

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



You don't have to feel guilty.

Your spouse is the one responsible for his violent behaviour.

You have nothing to be ashamed of.

Many women in Québec go through the same thing.

**All around the world, men resort to violence
to control their spouses.**

Domestic violence is a serious problem that concerns everyone.

Don't face it alone.

Talk to someone you trust,
like a health or education professional or a neighbour.

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 immigrant woman or a woman who is experiencing domestic

Listen without judging

Believe her

Immigrant women or women from ethnocultural communities may have trouble confiding in another person or revealing domestic violence for a number of reasons.

They may be:

- Afraid of being judged because they don't speak French or English
- Ashamed to talk about a problem they see as private
- Afraid they will be judged or disbelieved, particularly if they have experienced discrimination or racism

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.

from an ethnocultural community violence? If she trusts you, you can help

Tell her it's not her fault

Immigrant women or women from ethnocultural communities often see themselves as guardians of their culture and families. They may feel guilty and see themselves as dishonouring their spouse or breaking up the family unit. Others feel guilty for having attained a degree of independence and self-assurance they didn't have in their country of origin.

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, particularly if they get support from their families or communities.

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. It undermines self-confidence. The road to restoring self-confidence and taking back control of one's life can be long.

Here are some of the reasons that can lead an immigrant woman or a woman from an ethnocultural community to tolerate violence:

- The hope of restoring a loving relationship
- Taboos
- Fear of being rejected by the community
- Lack of knowledge of resources and rights
- Fear of police and the justice system
- Fear of losing her children or being abandoned without support

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

Offer your support

Isolation plays a big part in domestic violence. This isolation is often greater for immigrant women or women from ethnocultural communities who have lost their original social network and have had to learn new cultural codes and values. Some women speak no French or English and feel particularly cut off. Others face all kinds of obstacles in finding work.

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 wants, offer to go with her when she seeks help.

Fight prejudice and invisibility

Many people think that immigrant women or women from ethnocultural communities accept domestic violence because of their culture or religion. This is false. They simply encounter more obstacles than other women in dealing with it. Many of them must overcome difficulties related to their minority status, including marginalization, discrimination, and racism. These challenges make them more vulnerable to domestic violence.

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 immigrant women and women from ethnocultural communities 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:

- Shield of Athena (www.shieldofathena.com)
- Maison pour femmes immigrantes, Québec City (www.maisonpourfemmesimmigrantes.com)
- Association des femmes immigrantes de l'Outaouais (www.aifo.ca).

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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 as a PDF document in English, French or Spanish. Word versions are available in these languages and some others. They can be found on the SCF website under the Publications tab.