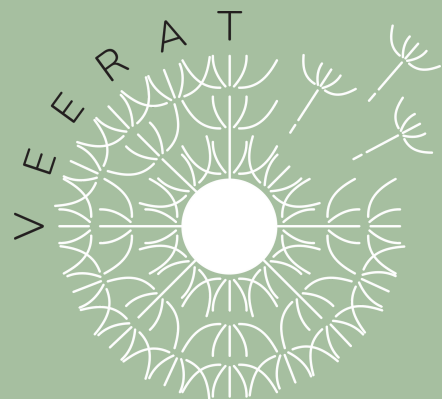




Is There Intimate Partner Violence in My Life?

For Women Concerned About Intimate Partner
Violence and Substance Use

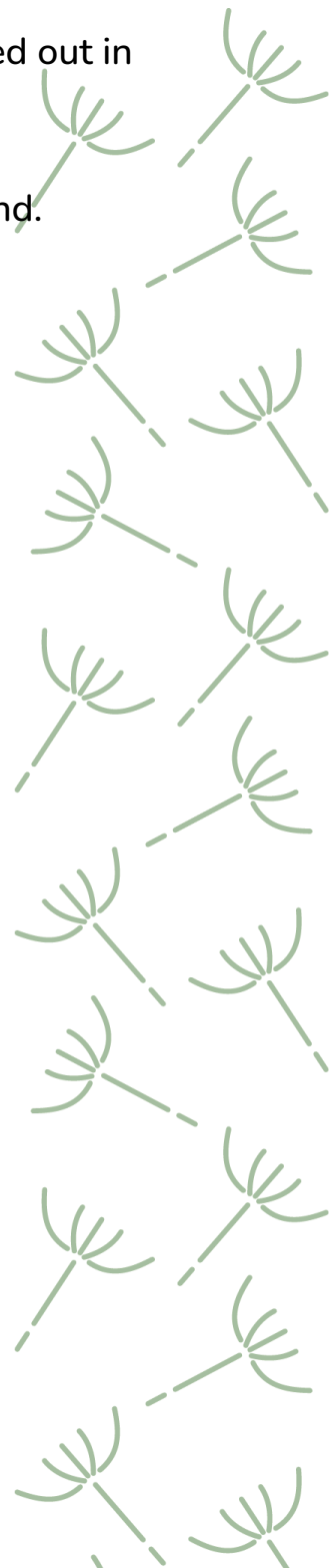


This booklet has been produced as part of the VEERAT – From Peer Support to Hope and Tools for Personal Recovery and Growth – project. The project is intended for women who are in recovery or concerned about their own substance use, and who are also reflecting on issues related to intimate partner violence.

The project is coordinated by the A-Kiltojen Liitto ry and is carried out in collaboration with Maria Akatemia ry.

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For You

The purpose of this booklet is to help you recognize whether there is intimate partner violence in your life and how substance use may be connected to it. This booklet aims to help you understand that substance use never justifies violence or makes it any less serious. The booklet provides information about intimate partner violence and includes women's own words and reflections on the connection between violence and substance use. We hope this booklet helps you find the words to talk about your own experiences.

You have the right to be heard, supported, and helped.

What Is Intimate Partner Violence?

Violence refers to the intentional use—or threat—of physical force or other forms of power directed at oneself, another person, or a community. When we speak of intimate partner violence, we mean violence that occurs within a close relationship, either current or past, between the person using violence and the one experiencing it. Intimate partner violence can be directed at a current or former partner, a child, a close relative, or another person with whom there is a significant personal bond.

Violence in relationships can take many forms. Sometimes it is direct and easy to identify, but it can also be very subtle and difficult to recognize. A common thread is the use—or threat—of coercive control and power. Violence is often repetitive in nature. Different forms of violence may occur simultaneously, making them harder to detect.

Emotional Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliberately breaks down the other person's self-esteem, making them feel worthless Humiliation, name-calling, belittling, and constant criticism Alternates between affection and abuse Exploits the stigma around substance use to intensify the other person's shame 	Coercion and Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Threatens to abandon or harm Threatens suicide Forces the victim to drop charges related to violence Forces the victim to commit illegal acts Pressures into substance use Uses threats related to drug access, overdose, or police involvement 	Physical and Sexual Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hitting, kicking, pulling, choking, restraining, threatening with a bladed weapon Degrading treatment, coercion into sexual acts, pressure, rape, abuse, threats of sexual violence, coercion into pornography Intentional transmission of infectious diseases (e.g., through injecting equipment) In connection with substance use: exploitation, coercion into prostitution
Using Privilege and Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treats the other person like a servant Makes all decisions alone Defines the roles in the relationship unilaterally 	POWER AND CONTROL – Including the Role of Substance Use	Intimidation Through Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses facial expressions, gestures, or actions to intimidate Breaks objects, destroys property Abuses pets Plays with weapons or talks about using them
Minimizing, Denying, and Blaming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downplays the violence Claims the violence never happened Shifts responsibility for the violence onto the victim Blames substance use or intoxication for the violence Blames the victim's behavior, provocation, or substance use; cites the victim's poor memory of events 		Isolation from Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Controls who the person meets, talks to, and where they go Restricts movement outside the home, tracks phone location Justifies actions with jealousy Acts as a drug supplier or link to dealers and criminal groups, using addiction to bind the person to themselves and the drug-using community.
Digital Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constant calls and messages; demands to always be reachable Restricts the other person's phone use and communication (calls, messages, and social media) Demands access to read all messages and call logs Requires proof of location through photos or video calls Secretly records or listens using various devices Shares or threatens to share intimate photos or videos of the other person Monitors the other person's activity via phone or computer using spyware 	Using Children as a Means of Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses children to induce guilt Uses children to deliver messages Uses visitation rights to threaten with violence; threatens with custody issues Threatens to take the children away Threatens with causing a miscarriage 	Financial Abuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevents the person from working or studying Causes job loss Controls all spending, gives an allowance, or denies access to money Uses financial threats or blackmail Violates banking confidentiality Crimes, debts, fines, etc. resulting from substance use

There is a clear difference between a disagreement and violence, but it can sometimes be difficult to recognize.

- In a disagreement, the goal is to resolve a difference of opinion.
- In a disagreement, both people can express their opinions.
- In a disagreement, both parties can admit they were wrong.
- A disagreement requires two people.
- Disagreements do not cause fear.
- Disagreements that stay focused and allow for breaks are a normal part of relationships.

- In violence, the goal is to force the other person to comply.
- In violence, one person is too afraid to speak up.
- Someone who uses violence believes they are always right.
- Violence requires only one.
- Someone experiencing violence may feel afraid or fear the consequences.
- Violence is never a natural or acceptable part of any relationship.

NOTE: Violence may occur during a disagreement, but it can never be justified as part of a disagreement or as behavior resulting from one. Violence is always wrong.

Warning signs:

- You are afraid of your partner, or someone close to you is afraid of you. Remember! Fear isn't always easy to identify – but that doesn't mean violence isn't happening.
- You find yourself wondering whether it's safe to express your opinion.
- You worry about what might happen or what the consequences will be if you don't do what the other person wants.
- Someone else decides for you how you're allowed to behave, speak, dress, who you can see, or how you spend your money.
- Your partner excuses or downplays their behavior by blaming it on alcohol or drugs. You find yourself explaining their behavior by pointing to substance use.
- Your partner uses substances as a tool of manipulation to get what they want.

Everyone is responsible for their own behavior.

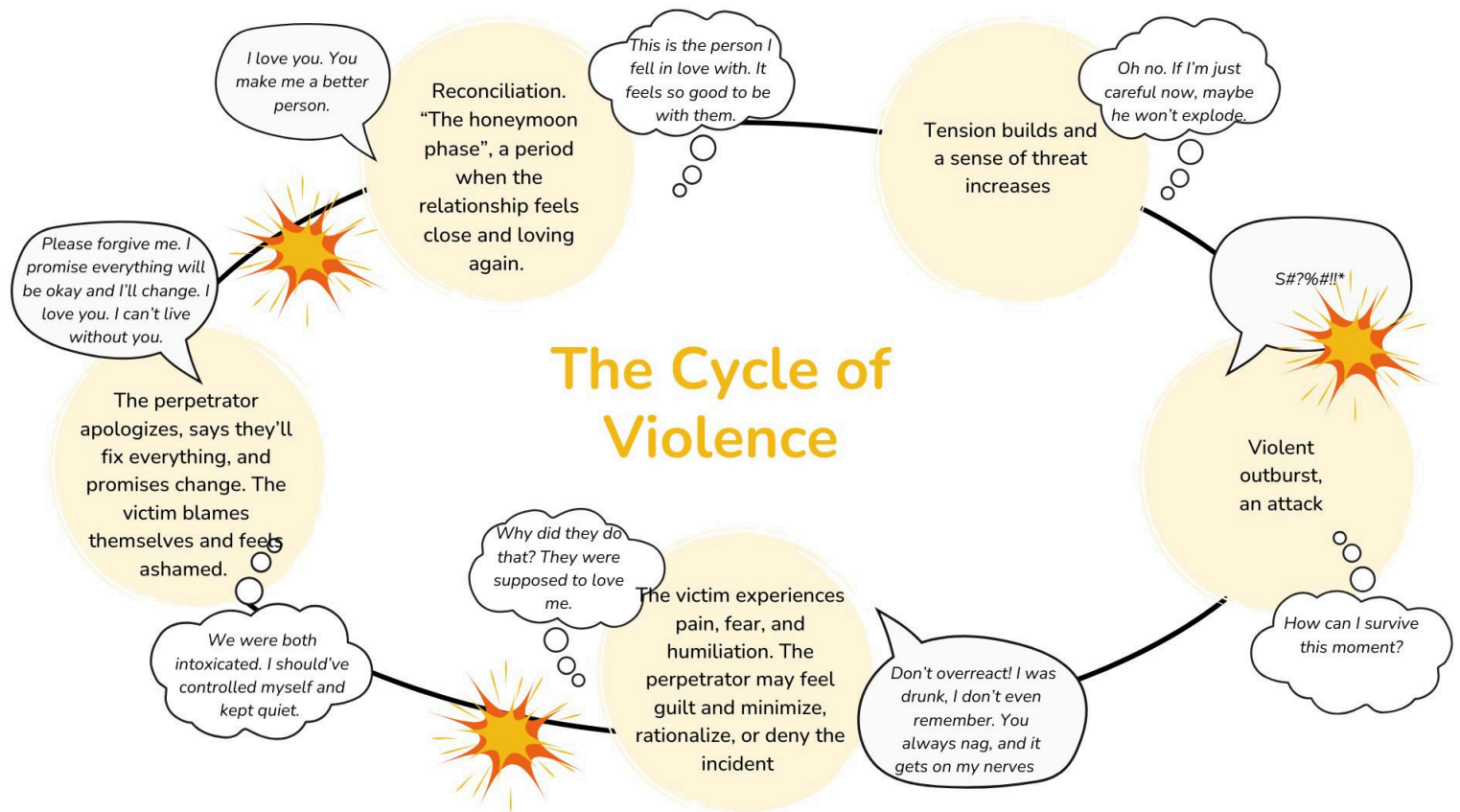
Experiencing, committing, and witnessing violence are not always clearly distinguishable. A person who has experienced violence may also act violently in their own relationships. Violence tends to perpetuate more violence, and personal boundaries around behavior can become blurred. Even if you have behaved violently yourself, you still have the right to receive help and support for the violence you have experienced. Everyone deserves to be treated without violence, and you don't have to be perfect to seek help. Being under the influence of substances at the time of the violence does not make the violence any less serious or condemnable.

Each person is responsible for their own actions, and violence should never be met with more violence. Feeling guilty about one's own violent behavior is normal. It is a sign that you have acted against your own values. You don't have to deal with guilt alone—it's okay to talk about your own violent behavior and to seek help for it.

In an emergency or violent situation, always call 112.



Intimate partner violence can follow a recurring pattern



Violent relationships often follow a recurring pattern, commonly described as a cycle. Recognizing violence and breaking free from it can be difficult because there are often many good moments between the bad ones. During the good times, one may feel loved, and being together can feel wonderful. These phases bring renewed hope that things will change, and the violence will stop.

There may be long periods between the different phases of the cycle, but over time the pattern often escalates, and the violence becomes more severe. Substance use can make the cycle more unstable, adding unpredictable outbursts of violence that are impossible to foresee.

People do not get used to violence, but they may learn coping strategies necessary for survival when violence becomes part of everyday life. In some cases, substance use becomes a form of escape—an attempt to endure the violence.

It is true that being intoxicated increases the risk of both committing and experiencing violence.

However, there is a common tendency to blame substances as the cause of the violence. This shifts responsibility away from the person and onto the substance, as if the violence were not the fault of the one who acted violently. But this is not true.

Do these kinds of explanations sound familiar?

“I would never do that if I were sober.”

“They were so drunk, they didn’t mean it.”

“I was really intoxicated too.”

“I provoked them.”

“They’re a good partner—except when they’re under the influence.”

“They provoked me.”

It’s important to understand that violent situations have the same impact regardless of whether substances are involved.

Being intoxicated does not justify violence against you, and substance use does not give you the right to be violent.

Substances do not make violence any less serious — violence always causes harm. Substance use also doesn’t eliminate the need for help or your right to receive support in the aftermath of violence.

Intimate Partner Violence Can Affect Many Areas of Life

Violence always affects everyone involved. Even if the violence happened a long time ago, there may still be a strong need for support and processing the experience. This is completely normal, and it is important to seek help. If experiences of violence are never addressed, it may increase the risk of harmful substance use or become a barrier to recovery from substance use.

The effects of violence can be long-lasting and vary greatly. Violence can lead to physical injuries, depression, anxiety, difficulties in sexual life, unexplained pain, sleep disturbances, chronic stress, panic disorders, or feelings of fear. It can also cause intense feelings of shame or guilt, memory blackouts, emotional numbness, or denial of the event. The fear caused by violence may surface or intensify in later relationships, and the fear does not necessarily end when the violent relationship ends.

Unprocessed experiences of violence and their effects can, at worst, erupt in harmful ways—either toward oneself or others.

It Is Possible to Recover from Violence

Tell someone about the violence. Leaving a violent situation is not easy and may take several attempts. Even if you don't succeed right away, you are still entitled to help and support.

”

“The self-blame is overwhelming. It's important that someone says out loud: it's not your fault.”

Recovery takes time. It often requires support from loved ones, peers, or professionals — as well as compassion toward yourself. But there is always hope. Everyone has the right to a life free from violence. Substance use or past mistakes do not justify violence.

”

“At home, you should be able to feel calm and safe.”





*I want to say NO
to violence, to shouting, and to belittling.*

*I am allowed to feel anger, but not contempt.
I do not accept submission, control,
or any form of humiliation.*

I no longer break my own boundaries.

*I have the right to be free from violence
in all its forms.*

I no longer have to face belittlement.

*Nor will I hide,
threaten,
or use violence myself.*

By doing so, I avoid hurting others.

I AM FREE ♥

**Poem by the women of the VEERAT group, who are
recovering from substance use and intimate partner violence**

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