

# PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST VIOLENCE

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What you can do yourself  
ENGELS



TransAct supports policymakers, managers, trainers, doctors, care workers and other health and welfare professionals, the police, justice and probation services and the Child Welfare Council. TransAct's core tasks are developing knowledge and methods, policy analysis and agenda setting and providing training and advice.

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## PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST VIOLENCE

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Violence can occur anywhere. At home, at work or in public. Violence occurs in all cultures. Women, men and children can all be affected by it, either as victims or as witnesses. The most common form is domestic violence: violence in your own home. It happens at all levels in society, and it happens to people of all ages, professions and income groups, both in the big cities and out in the country.

Violence is not something you should tolerate or accept as normal. You can take steps to stop it. Even if you feel that you are in a dependent position because you are a migrant or refugee. This brochure will tell you what you can do against violence.

## WHO IS IT FOR?

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This brochure is for women, in particular for black, migrant and refugee women. Read how you can protect yourself against violence.

## WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

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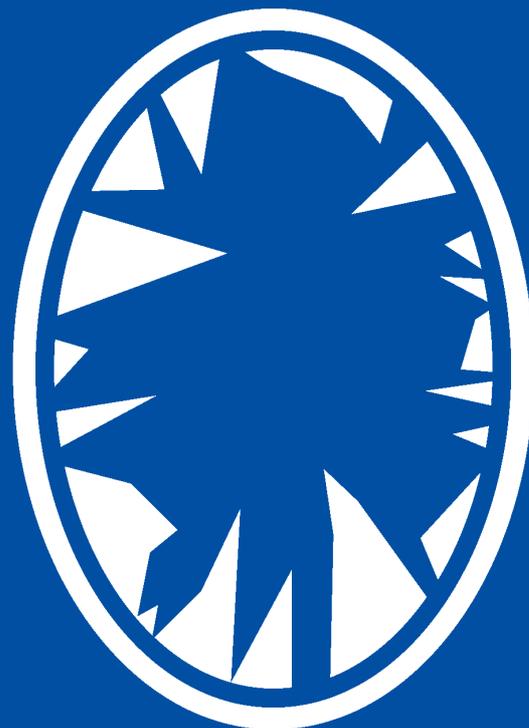
There are many different forms of violence.

**Physical violence**, such as being hit, kicked or spat at, having hot oil or water poured over you or being thrown down the stairs.

**Sexual violence**, like being forced to have sex, rape, circumcision, the abortion of girl foetuses or being forced to watch others in sexual acts.

**Psychological violence**: being intimidated, sworn at, refused any money or benefit of your own, not being allowed to use the telephone, having your passport or residence permit confiscated. Kidnapping, being locked up or not being allowed to take part in any activities or keep any contacts outside the home. Being threatened with the use of violence against you or your children, destroying your personal possessions, threatening to commit suicide. It also includes racial discrimination and other such unreasonable insults ("you smell", "you're a thief").

These three forms of violence often occur in combination. All kinds of violence can be dangerous and can have consequences for the victim.



## WHO COMMITS VIOLENCE?

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In most cases of violence, men are the offenders and women and children the victims. But women can be perpetrators, too, and men the victims. Research shows that most victims of violence know the offender in one way or another. It might be a friend, a member of the family (husband, father or mother-in-law), an acquaintance, neighbour or boss. Don't let that fact stop you from seeking help or bringing charges against that person.

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## PREJUDICE

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There are many prejudices about violence against women. Those prejudices can affect how women feel about the violence they have suffered and how they feel about themselves.

The most common prejudices:

**“Women ask for it.”**

Nobody asks to be maltreated or raped. These are brutal crimes that occur no matter how women

dress, how they look, what their profession is, how old they are or where they go.

**“Men commit sexual violence and rape because they cannot control their sexual desires.”**

All men can control their sexual desires if they want to. No desire whatsoever gives anyone the right to be violent to anyone else. This kind of violence is inspired by the will to control, dominate, hurt and intimidate the victim, not by sexual desire.

**“It is reasonable for a man to use violence to control his family, to show who's boss or to enforce his authority.”**

A man is an equal member of the family. The use of violence for any reason whatsoever is unacceptable. Disagreements should be resolved by talking, not by violence.

**“Every family has its problems, this is my fate, it is Allah's will, it's written in the Koran.”**

Violence has nothing to do with the family you are born into or with fate. There is nothing in the Koran that says that Allah wants women or men to

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become the victim of violence. In fact, the Koran says that a woman should be treated with the same care as a priceless glass.

**“If you go out with someone you are obliged to have sex with them.”**

You do not have to have sex with anyone you go out with, or when that person pays for your drink or meal. Neither do you have to have sex with anyone you have invited into your home.

Being forced to have sex with anyone on a date is unacceptable. Forcing someone to have sex is against the law.

## **THE CONSEQUENCES**

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To endure violence is painful and humiliating. Victims often suffer different feelings and problems. Everybody reacts differently.

- Because of all the stories, many women think that they are guilty of the violence instead of the perpetrator. "If only she had... then it wouldn't have

happened." But nobody has the right to abuse or maltreat somebody else. The perpetrator is guilty.

- Some women are ashamed that violence occurs to them
- Many women become too scared to go out on the street, scared of being beaten again, of being touched or afraid of men in general.
- You can also be very angry, at the perpetrator or at other people who did not protect you.
- You can suffer from nightmares and have trouble sleeping, lose your appetite and feel ill or dirty. Or think you are going mad.

## HOW CAN YOU PROTECT YOURSELF AGAINST VIOLENCE?

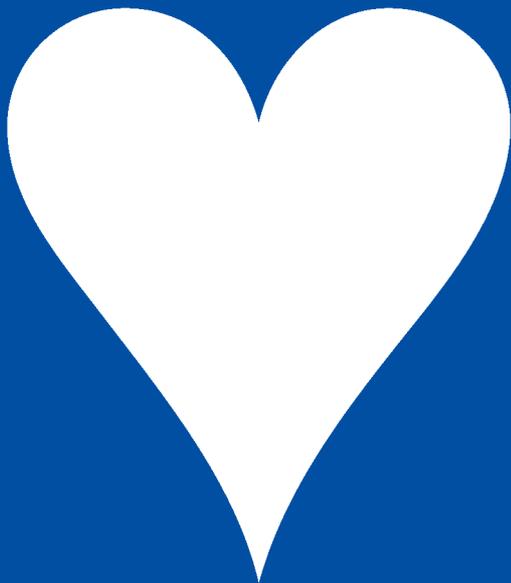
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Violence has often a big impact. It is hard to solve your problems alone. You may be scared of the consequences if you talk with somebody else about

your problems. Or you may feel ashamed or guilty. If you feel you cannot cope, it might help to talk to someone about what happened and what you are going through. Talk to somebody you trust and who does understand you. A friend, for example, or a member of your family or a professional helper. You can also phone people who can help you. There are many women who face violence. Professional counsellors are there to help these women. If you are scared of violence from a member of your family, your husband for example, then it is a good idea to work out an emergency plan. If you don't feel you can, seek support from professional helpers. The police can help you too; they are there for your safety!

### 1. Seek assistance from professional helpers

Deciding what to do is very important, but also very difficult. Talking to someone can help you decide what you want to do and what you can do. There are people and organisations that can help you. These helpers can explain the options you



have. They can give you addresses of places to go where you will be safe. You can ask them to treat your details (file) confidentially. If you do decide to go to a professional help organisation, it can be a good idea to take a close friend along with you. Every local authority in the country has a social services department where people will listen to your problems and offer advice. The number is in the telephone book. You can go to a women's shelter if you need a safe place to hide for a while. In some districts, there is a special phone number for victims of domestic violence. You can find the addresses and numbers you need on the website [www.huiselijkgeweld.nl](http://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl).

If you want to talk to someone about domestic violence on the telephone, you can contact:

- Allochtone vrouwentelefoon (women's helpline): tel. 0800 024 0027 (free number, Monday to Friday, 10am-2pm and Monday, Wednesday 7-10pm). [www.allochtonevrouwentelefoon.com](http://www.allochtonevrouwentelefoon.com)
- Stichting Korrelatie (Correlation Foundation),

help with relationship problems: tel. 0900 1450 or e-mail vraag@korrelatie.nl.

There are also organisations of migrant women that you can turn to:

- Stichting Kezban, (Kezban Foundation) can inform you about domestic violence:

Postbus 166, 1110 AD Diemen, tel. 0612 507996, info@st-kezban.nl.

- Stichting Shakti (Shakti Foundation) for support and guidance: tel. 040 211 8740, e-mail shakti@iae.nl.

If your husband or partner is violent, he could join a therapy group for behavioural change. Some women find that once their husband joins such a group, the violence at home decreases. However, there is no guarantee that participation in such a group will have the desired effect. Addresses of therapy and self-help groups are available at local refugee organisations from your contact person at the Refugee Council or from social services.

## 2. Make your own emergency plan

An emergency plan can make it easier for you to escape from a violent environment. It will increase your chances of survival away from the surroundings you are used to.

The stages of an emergency plan.

**1. Build a circle of friends and helpers around you** who can offer financial, emotional and practical help when you actually leave. Various self-help groups and institutes have information about shelters.

**2. Arrange a shelter for yourself and your children** that the offender does not know about. If at first it is impossible for you all to go to one address, arrange several alternative shelters.

**3. Pack a suitcase with clothes and other things that you will need immediately** should the situation become so bad that you have to leave home in a hurry. At a time like that you might not even have

time to dress yourself or your children properly. Keep the suitcase well hidden in a strategic but easily accessible place in the house.

**4. Collect any important official documents that you think you might need**, like your passport, marriage certificate, the children's birth certificates, your residence permit, bank cards, bank statements, diplomas and a list of important telephone numbers and addresses. Keep them in an easily accessible place where you can grab them quickly if you need to get away in a hurry. Or keep them somewhere safe outside the home where you can collect them once you've left.

**5. Do the same with your most valuable personal possessions.**

**6. Keep a diary or record of everything connected in any way to the violence.** Keep letters, tapes, doctor's prescriptions, police statements, court details and photos, and make copies of all important documents. You could need any or all of these later as proof of the violence. Keep these documents in a

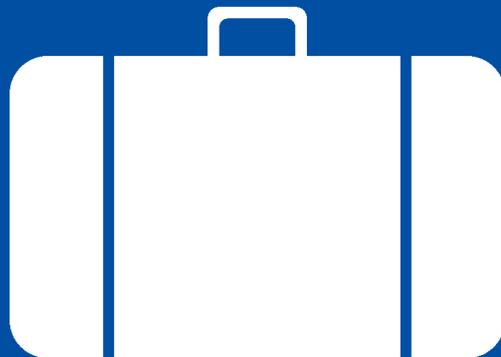


safe place, or give them to someone you trust very well for safe keeping.

**7. Before you decide to leave, discuss your legal rights and obligations,** especially those concerning your children and your home, with a professional helper or lawyer. You could also choose to talk with a respected figure in your own community.

**8. After you have left, do not under any circumstances give the offender any details of your whereabouts.** Be extremely careful. Always tell a close friend where you are going and what time you plan to be back. Always take as many safety precautions as possible. Have an alarm system installed and extra locks fitted to your doors and windows, buy a guard dog and a mobile phone that will show you who is calling.

**9. Use the law and the regulations designed to protect you.** If necessary, seek a restraining order or report the violence to the police. If the case goes to court, request a lawyer to support you at all the hearings. Go through every single legal procedure



possible to convince the offender of his responsibility for his actions and to protect yourself. Do not allow yourself to be intimidated.

**IO.** If you do not speak Dutch, or not well enough, seek help from an organisation that speaks your language or where the services of an interpreter are available free of charge. Or carry the telephone number of an interpreting centre in the area, or take someone with you who you trust completely and who can interpret for you.

violence, you can also go to the police afterwards. They will listen to you and explain what they can do. You can bring charges if you want to, or you can just tell them your story. If you do decide to bring charges, they will ask for proof; they will ask to see any wounds, and take statements from your doctor or anyone else who saw or heard what happened. As a woman, you are entitled to an individual residence permit if you divorce because your husband mistreated you. You will not have to leave the Netherlands.

### 3. Call the police

If you need immediate help call the police: **dial 112**.

The police are there to promote safety in all situations, and that includes cases of domestic violence. If they come to your home because you or your neighbours have called them, they will approach the offender about his behaviour and discuss what happens next. In cases of serious violence the police may prosecute, in which case the offender will probably be taken to court. If you have suffered

## TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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- For the Domestic Violence Advice and Support Centre (Adviespunt en Steunpunt Huiselijk geweld) in your region, as well social services and other assistance, look in the telephone book or visit [www.huiselijkgeweld.nl](http://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl).

- Allochtone vrouwentelefoon (women's helpline): Tel. **0800 024 0027** (free number, Monday to Friday, 10am-2pm and Monday, Wednesday 7-10pm). [www.allochtonevrouwentelefoon.com](http://www.allochtonevrouwentelefoon.com)

- Stichting Korrelatie (help by telephone): Tel. **0900 1450**, e-mail [vraag@korrelatie.nl](mailto:vraag@korrelatie.nl)

- Stichting Kezban (information on domestic violence): Tel. **0612 507996**, e-mail [info@st-kezban.nl](mailto:info@st-kezban.nl).

- Stichting Shakti (support and guidance) : Tel. **040 211 8740**, e-mail [shakti@iae.nl](mailto:shakti@iae.nl).





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