



Ålands hälso-
& sjukvård

When love hurts



Violence in close relationships

8/2025

WHEN LOVE HURTS - VIOLENCE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS

What is violence in a close relationship?

Violence in close relationships is a pattern of behavior where one person uses power and control to harm another. It can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, background, or social group. Violence is always a violation of a person's right to safety, dignity, and self-determination — and it is a crime.

This type of violence can take many forms, ranging from subtle psychological manipulation to severe physical or sexual abuse. It often escalates over time and is typically hidden from others, taking place behind closed doors.

Violence can be

Psychological violence – Includes behaviors that humiliate, belittle, threaten, control, or isolate another person.

Examples:

- Insults, criticism, name-calling
- Threats and intimidation
- Extreme jealousy
- Preventing contact with family or friends
- Destroying personal belongings or harming pets
- Threatening suicide or preventing someone from seeking help

Physical violence – Any use of physical force intended to harm or control. Examples:

- Hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking
- Pulling hair, grabbing clothes or body parts
- Choking, shaking, or dragging
- Threats involving weapons or objects

Sexual violence – Involves any sexual act forced upon someone without their consent. Examples:

- Rape or attempted rape
- Unwanted sexual acts or humiliation

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Coercion into pornography

Denial of contraceptive use or forced abortion

Economic violence – Using financial means to control or harm another person. Examples:

Taking or controlling someone's money or property

Forcing financial dependence

Threatening economic harm or using extortion

Digital violence – Using technology to monitor, control, or harass someone. Examples:

Tracking with GPS or spyware

Controlling social media or online activity

Sending abusive messages or threats

Involving others (e.g. children) in the abuse

Cultural or religious violence – Using cultural or religious beliefs to justify control or abuse. Examples:

Forcing someone to adopt beliefs

Religious oppression or exclusion

"Honour"-based violence

Neglect and mistreatment – Failing to care for someone who depends on others for safety or health. Examples:

Leaving a child, elderly, or disabled person without care

Using medication or substances to cause harm

Child abuse – Any form of neglect, emotional harm, or physical abuse toward a child. Examples:

Leaving children alone or uncared for

Verbal or physical aggression

Using power or fear to control the child

Impact on Children

Even when children are not directly subjected to violence, they are always affected when it occurs in their home or close environment. Living with violence can deeply harm a child's emotional, psychological, and physical development.

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Violence occurs in all social groups

Violence and abuse occurs in all social groups, ages and cultures. Anyone can be a victim of violence. It can be directed at children, adults, partners, parents, the elderly, indeed anyone, even pets.

Violence in close relationships is ongoing and can escalate. It is often associated with guilt, shame, fear, secrecy and silence. Violence usually takes place in the home where no one can see or hear.

Everyone is responsible!

Violence in close relationships is a societal issue – everyone has a role to play in stopping it.

Many victims feel guilt, shame, or fear, which prevents them from speaking up or seeking help. Because violence often happens behind closed doors, it is important that we stay alert and respond when something feels wrong.

If you witness or suspect violence — whether in your family, neighborhood, workplace or among friends — don't stay silent. Speak up. Show support. Help break the silence.

If you witness violence or hear signs of violence, for example at a neighbour's house, call the emergency number 112.

Break the vicious circle, break the silence - seek help!

You are not alone in your experiences!

Talk to someone you trust: Sharing your experience can be the first step toward safety and healing.

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Seek information and support: Helplines, websites, local authorities, and organizations can provide guidance and assistance.

Remember: No one deserves to be abused or threatened. Violence is never your fault.

Perpetrators of violence also need help to change their behavior. It is the person using violence who is responsible for it, and seeking support is a vital step toward breaking the cycle.

Together, we can end violence in close relationships.

If you witness violence or signs of abuse, do not hesitate to take action. Your courage can make a difference. Whether you are a victim, a witness, or someone concerned for a friend or family member, support is available.

What you can do

If you hear or witness violence (for example, from a neighbor), call emergency services – 112.

If someone confides in you about abuse, listen without judgment and encourage them to seek help.

If you are affected by violence yourself – you are not alone. Support is available.

If you are using violence, you can also seek help to change your behavior.

Ending the cycle of violence requires courage, honesty, and action — from all of us.

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Help is available! Contact any of the following

Emergency number 112

Emergency services 018-19 000

Police 8 am–4 pm 018-527 100
Other times 112

You can talk to the police without filing a report!

Åland Health and Medical Care

Social worker, contact via ÅHS switchboard 018-5355

Medical information 018-535 117

Mental Health 018-538 300

or ÅHS online booking www.ahs.ax

For those who have been subjected to sexual violence

Seri support centre 018-535 189 (24 hours a day)

Shelter for those who are subjected to violence, Tallbacken

Telephone 018-532 842

Adult social work emergency, KST

Telephone 8 a.m.–4 p.m. 018-532 880

Social emergency services, KST, urgent matters outside office hours

Telephone 018-12 200

If you are a victim of violence or if you are concerned that a child is being harmed contact these services

Family counselling, Folkhälsan 018-527 048

Crime Victim Support in Åland 0457-345 5777

Crime Victim Support (European helpline for victims of crime)
helpline in Swedish Mon-Fri 12 noon-2 p.m. 116006

helpline in Finnish,
Mon-Thu 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Fri 9 a.m.-4 p.m. 116006

RIKU chat - The chat is a quick and easy online service, where you can ask, tell about and obtain advice in regards to criminal cases

Web service in Finnish Mon-Thu 9 a.m.-6 p.m. and Fri 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

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Support chat - Ärligt talat, in Swedish for 13-29 year olds
Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and 7 p.m.-10 p.m.

Helplines

Women's Peace Line 18-25 500

Support line for men 018- 25504

Support line for transgender people 018-25509

(Only local call charges apply, even though the calls are answered in Uppsala
You can remain anonymous. The charge will not appear on your phone bill.)

Nollalinjen 24-hour helpline in Swedish, Finnish and English
Telephone 080 005 005 www.nollalinja.fi

Help and support in difficult situations, MIELI Crisis Helpline

Telephone 09-25 25 0116 (English) Mon 4 p.m.-8 p.m. and Fri 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

If you have been subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence.

Kvinnofridslinjen is open 24 hours a day and provides support to anyone who's been subjected to threats and violence. Calls are free and you can remain anonymous.

www.kvinnofridslinjen.se

www.regeringen.ax

Rape crisis centre for victims of sexual abuse and violence - Tukinainen

Telephone 0800 97 899 Mon-Fri 9 a.m.-3 p.m. www.tukinainen.fi/en/

If you have experienced violence or a threat of violence Crisis center Monika helpline

Telephone 080 005058 Mon - Fri 9 a.m.-4 p.m. www.monikanaiset.fi

Chat in different languages Arabic, Dari, English, Persian

Alternatives to violence treatment for perpetrators of violence

Telephone 0457-529 1041 Email atv@atv.ax

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ASYL-, MIGRATIONS-
OCH INTEGRATIONSFONDEN

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EN SÄKER HAMN



Ålands hälso-
& sjukvård

PB 1055 AX-22111 Mariehamn
Tfn +358 18 5355 (vxl) | www.ahs.ax