



Vernon Women's **Transition House** Society

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The **Vernon Women's Transition House** is a **safe haven for women and children** who are escaping an abusive relationship and for your women who have been in trouble with the law and are referred by MCFD (Ministry for Children & Family Development) or probation.

Perhaps you have questions about the Vernon Women's Transition House, how to find us, or about your safety?

Here you will find answers to many common questions. Included in this document are some '**Frequently Asked Questions**', which might assist you in your decision to seek help.

If you are unable to find answers to your questions here, please feel free to contact us at **(250) 542-1122**. Someone will be more than happy to assist you.

### TYPES OF ABUSE

Q. **What is Emotional Abuse?**

A. **Emotional abuse** is damaging to the soul. It often leaves a vague feeling of pain, a sense of something wrong that is hard to identify. Since it is so difficult to define, women often doubt their own perceptions. The emotional abuse of someone keeps the partner on an emotional roller coaster. He keeps her off balance so she does not trust her own sense of reality.

Like other forms of violence in relationships, emotional abuse is based on power and control.

**Some examples are as follows:**

- **Isolation:** The man will strongly discourage contact with friends and family. He will insist upon a move to an area far from these people, possibly rural or remote if they are city dwellers.
- **Limiting involvement with others:** He will deny the woman access to a car, not allowing her to go to school. If she is employed, he will harass her on the telephone or turn up at her workplace and cause trouble so that she loses her job.

- **Control of finances:** He will take her money, give her an allowance or make her ask for money. She will have to account for all her expenditures and will have no knowledge of the family finances.
- **Putting her down:** The man will call her names, ridicule her, intimidate her, tell her she is '*stupid*', yell at her, downplay her accomplishments, degrade her dignity and self-worth, make her feel useless and inferior.
- **Playing mind games:** He will deny the abuse every happened, say '*she caused it*', or make light of the abuse telling her '*she has no sense of humor.*'
- **Using the children:** He will threaten to take the children away from her.
- **Anger and jealousy:** The man will get angry and jealous and accuse her of having affairs if she even speaks to another man.

Q. **What is Physical Abuse?**

A. **THE FIRST THING TO REMEMBER IS THAT YOUR ABUSER IS THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE BEHAVIOUR... NOT YOU.**

**Physical Abuse** is a way to create fear and an ability to control what a woman does. The abuser often has more power than those they are abusing. Often, drugs and/or alcohol are used as excuses for the abusive behaviour. BUT the real cause for this type of behaviour is the abusers own need to use violence and abuse to control another person.

**Some examples of Physical Abuse are:**

- Slapping, punching, shoving, kicking or biting you, or pulling your hair
- Destroying your property
- Abusing your loved ones such as children, siblings or parents
- "Caring" for you in a controlling way. This can include things like giving you too much medication or keeping you confined.
- Using a weapon or other objects to threaten, hurt or kill you.

Q. **How do I know if I am abused?**

A. There are many ways to tell whether or not you are being abused. Here are just a few that might confirm your feelings:

- Are you **frightened by his temper?**

- Do you feel like you have to “walk on eggshells” to keep your partner from getting angry?
- Do you feel anxiety whenever it is time for him to return home from work?
- Are you afraid to tell him your worries and feelings about the relationship or express your opinions?
- Do you feel that you should stop seeing other friends or family, or give up activities you enjoy because he doesn't like them?
- Do you feel that you should comply because you are afraid to hurt his feelings; and have the urge to “rescue” him when he is troubled?
- Have you found yourself making excuses to yourself or others for your partner's behaviour when you are treated badly?
- Have you been kicked, hit, shoved, or had things thrown at you by him when he was jealous or angry?
- Does he say critical things to you to make you feel bad?
- Do you believe that his jealousy is a sign of love?
- Do you feel that you have to stay because you feel that he will harm or kill himself if you leave?

Q. **What is Sexual Abuse?**

A. As with other forms of abuse, **Sexual Abuse** is not really about the act of having sex as much as it is about **control**. Some form of violence is usually associated with Sexual Abuse and the ‘**Free Will**’ is taken from the person being Sexually Abuse. Again, the abuser is often stronger and able to overpower the woman, leaving her vulnerable to his abuse.

**A few examples of Sexual Abuse are as follows:**

- Touching or acting in a sexual way that you don't want
- Forcing or pressuring you into sexual acts
- Forcing you to be a prostitute
- Forcing you to get pregnant, have an abortion, or have an operation so that you cannot have children
- Infecting you with HIV or other sexually transmitted diseases

Q. **How will the ongoing abuse affect me?**

A. The effects of abuse continue even after the abuse has stopped. Counselling and support are necessary to deal with the day-to-day feelings and fears surrounding the abuse.

**Some things that you may feel after suffering from abuse are as follows:**

- Self blame and guilt

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of helplessness
- Anxiety / Stress
- Anger
- Difficulty Sleeping or eating
- Self-destructive behaviour

Q. **What are signs of abuse using Neglect or Isolation?**

A. Some signs of abuse using **Neglect or Isolation** are:

- Not letting you see a doctor or dentist
- Locking you in the house without a phone
- Not letting you see friends or family members
- Not allowing you to work outside of the home
- Not allowing you to take courses in ESL (English is a Second Language)

Q. **How does my abuse effect my children?**

A. Children who witness the abuse of their mothers live in fear and anxiety, waiting for the next violent episode to occur.

Research has shown that, while some children show overt signs (**such as aggression and/or depression**) of their exposure to family conflict, other children display less obvious adjustment difficulties (**such as inappropriate attitudes about violence and/or poor problem-solving skills**).

Both types of children can benefit from our Children Who Witness Abuse Program, which is specifically designed to meet their needs. **(Phone 250-558-3850 Ext. 201).**

## **GETTING STARTED**

Q. **What do I need to bring with me if I decide to leave my abusive situation?**

A. Depending on how much time and opportunity you have to gather things, you might want to consider bringing along as many of the following items as possible:

- Identification
- Birth Certificates for you and your children
- Health Cards
- SIN (Social Insurance Number) cards

- School and medical records, including the telephone numbers of the school and your family doctor or clinic
- Money, bankbooks, cheque book and credit cards
- Keys – house, car, office
- Driving license and car registration documents
- Prescribed medication and vitamin supplements
- Court orders
- Social Assistance documents
- Passports, visas and work permits, immigration papers
- Mortgage details or lease and rental agreements
- Current unpaid bills
- Insurance documents
- Address book
- Family photographs, your diary, jewelry, small items of sentimental value
- Your children's favorite items of clothing and small toys
- Toiletries and clothes for you and your children

Q. **How do I get to the Transition House? Is transportation provided?**

A. **If you are in immediate danger**, simply **contact the Vernon Police Department – 911** and they know where we are located.

If you are **not in immediate danger**, we encourage you to contact our Transition House at **(250) 542-1122**. Our staff will be able to answer many of your questions and, in some cases (if you are living within Vernon City Limits), transportation can be arranged for you.

Q. **Am I able to bring my Children?**

A. **YES**, and it would be in a women's best interest to have her children with her.

Q. **Am I able to bring my pet(s)?**

A. The Transition House will try to assist with finding safe shelter for pets, but this would **NOT be on site**.

Q. **Do I need a restraining order? If so, how do I obtain one?**

A. You do not need to have a restraining order, but in the event that you should require one, our staff can assist you in trying to obtain one.

Q. **How long can I stay at the Transition House?**

A. **Short term stay** – length will vary depending on the situation.

**Average stay is usually 2-3 weeks.**

Q. **Is there a cost?**

A. **NO.** We are a Non-Profit Society and funded by the government, therefore the services of the Vernon Women's Transition House are completely **FREE OF CHARGE.**

## **LIFE AT A SHELTER**

Q. **Am I allowed to leave the Transition House during my stay?**

A. Women are free to come and go from the Transition House while staying here. However, there is an evening house curfew.

Q. **Where do I go after my stay at the Transition House?**

A. Some women find another rental in the community, some women leave the area and/or province, and some women return to their family home.

Q. **Will staff be able to assist me in finding other accommodations?**

A. It is the responsibility of each woman to find her own accommodations in preparation of leaving the Transition House. However, staff are available to lend support and to answer any of your questions.

Q. **If I have no money and no job, how do I set up other living accommodations (i.e. furniture, dishes, beds, etc.)?**

A. The Transition House can assist with some household items from our community donations (**Free of charge**).

Q. **Will the Transition House assist me in accessing Social Assistance?**

A. **YES** – Transition House staff can assist you with the process, as well as provide access to a computer.

Q. **Is there ongoing Counselling once I move to another location?**

- A. **YES** – Our organization offers **free** Women's Counselling Services to women who have experienced relationship abuse. Also, Transition House Staff can provide you with referral numbers to community services upon leaving the house.

## **SHELTERS AND YOUR CHILDREN**

Q. **Do my children and I have to share a room with anyone else?**

- A. **NO.** The Vernon Women's Transition House has a number of rooms for use by women and their children.

Q. **Will my child(ren) still be able to attend school while at the Transition House?**

- A. **YES** – However, it is up to moms to arrange transportation to and from school, if required.

Q. **How will my child(ren) spend their time at the Transition House?**

- A. We have an indoor play area that is equipped with toys, books, and a television. There are also a number of children's videos for their viewing enjoyment.

We also have an outdoor play area, which is fully fenced and locked for security.

## **SAFETY**

Q. **What is a 'Safety Plan' and how can I make one?**

- A. Please refer to the link **'When a Woman is Being Abused'**. You can also print off the booklet.

Q. Can I give the shelter's address to friends & family while I am staying there?

- A. Due to **'CONFIDENTIAL'** nature of the shelter, and to preserve our anonymity, it is advisable that the "actual" physical location is not revealed to the general public.

**This ensures the safety of our residents and staff, which is a priority of the Transition House.**

A telephone is available for use by the clients and **THAT number may be given to family members**, employers, prospective landlords, and/or close friends who need to remain in contact with the resident.

Q. **Will my partner be able to find me?**

A. Vernon Women's Transition House has many safety precautions in place to ensure your safety during your stay. Our staff are highly trained and will not speak to anyone about your stay without your permission. The Transition House is locked throughout the day and night and is monitored by an alarm system. **We are also staffed 24 hours a day.**

**Only people with whom you want contact will be permitted to see and/or speak with you.**

**YOUR SAFETY IS OUR PRIORITY.**