

“Not being listened to was one of my biggest problems.”



**People with disability can be infantilised and treated like children. A woman’s disability may be used as an excuse for abuse.**

“As a woman with an ‘invisible’ disability, I felt disregarded, disrespected and not believed.”

“Some people with disability get overlooked. They don’t get help because their needs are not understood.”

“As an autistic person, my perception of what happened was invalidated. People were skeptical that I could understand or accurately report what was happening.”

“When reporting to police as a visibly disabled person, you are treated like you should be thankful that someone has chosen to be with you. The narrative is that your non-disabled partner is a ‘saint’ for putting up with your disability and you should be grateful.”

**Not everyone reacts or responds to family and domestic violence in the same way. There is no one right way to respond to family and domestic violence. A victim should not have to act in a certain way to be taken seriously or be believed. They may show emotion or not.**



For help call: **1800RESPECT** or **1800 737 732**



For information go to: **[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)**

# Learn from our experience

Women with disability and family and domestic violence.



This information was developed by people with disability and parents of children with disability and is based on their direct experiences of family and domestic violence.



PATRICIA GILES  
Centre for  
Non-Violence



MODIFIED  
SERVICE  
DELIVERY



Government of Western Australia  
Department of Communities

**Statistics indicate that many people with disability cannot identify they are experiencing family and domestic violence (FDV). Women with disability report that it is difficult to recognise deliberate and manipulative behaviours. Women with disability may not know their rights or what to ask when seeking help.**

“When I felt vulnerable and was experiencing family and domestic violence, I felt like I didn’t deserve to voice my rights.”

“It was a gradual skewing of our relationship into different power dynamics before something happened.”

“I was really confused, in a fog and not thinking straight. I was all over the place and did not know where to go. I did not catch on that it was violence and did not know what was out there.”

**Women with disability say they can feel afraid, incapable, and powerless. They may feel alone and like there is no one who can or will help them.**

“I was a migrant woman who’d been intentionally isolated. I had no social or support network. I was thinking ‘what do I do? I have nothing and no one.’ I did not know what is out there. I did not think of going to refuge with a baby.”

“Society makes women with disability feel less worthy of love and happiness and abusers take advantage of that. Disability is a big part of being targeted.”



“As disabled people, our quality of life can be so compromised already that it’s hard to articulate when we’re struggling – we live in a constant state of struggle to some degree.”

“As a parent of a very sick child, I am vulnerable because of assumptions that disabled people cannot be good parents. I was scared to ask for support because I believed that social services would take my child, despite all the evidence that she should be with me.”

**Often the subject of FDV is not discussed. The person may be feeling shame or fear. They may present as rude or shutdown.**

**Women with psychosocial disability experiencing FDV report that there is a stigma and gap in services.**

**There is an underlying assumption that everyone is able to get support, but sometimes people with disability require assistance. When a woman seeks help and it is not available, it can be disheartening.**

“It was like I had trauma, on top of trauma, on top of trauma. Nobody really believed me because they thought I was just stressed.”

“I rely on my partner to live. I need people to support me to get up, get dressed and go out. When a partner is abusive, I have to choose between being safe or being able to live my life.”

