

# Walking on eggshells...

Child and adolescent violence in the family

A South Australian information and advice booklet for parents and carers developed in collaboration by Walking on Eggshells Project and SAPOL

# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the help, support and contribution to this booklet by a number of individuals and organisations.

## The Walking on Eggshells Project collaborative partners include:

Relationships Australia South Australia: [www.rasa.org.au](http://www.rasa.org.au)

Reconnect: City of Port Adelaide/Enfield [www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/programs-services/homelessness/reconnect](http://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/housing-support/programs-services/homelessness/reconnect)

Outer Southern Generic Homelessness Services, Lutheran Community Care: [www.lccsa.org.au/outer-southern-generic-homelessness-service.html](http://www.lccsa.org.au/outer-southern-generic-homelessness-service.html)

Centacare: [www.centacare.org.au/](http://www.centacare.org.au/)

Junction Community Centre: [www.junctioncommunity.org.au/](http://www.junctioncommunity.org.au/)

## We acknowledge the support of:

Australian Institute of Criminology, Crime and Violence Prevention Award 2013  
[www.aic.gov.au/crime\\_community/acvpa/2013.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/crime_community/acvpa/2013.html)

Government of South Australia, Community Benefits SA  
[www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/18448/Special-Community-Youth-Grants.pdf](http://www.dcsi.sa.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/18448/Special-Community-Youth-Grants.pdf)

## Resources and advice:

Members of the Walking on Eggshells Project reference group, South Australia.

Friend, D, Howard, J and Parker T, Adolescent Violence to Parents; A Resources Booklet for Parents and Carers, Inner South Community Health service, South Melbourne, 2008.

Eddie Gallagher for his ground breaking work in this area. See [www.eddiegallagher.id.au/](http://www.eddiegallagher.id.au/)

G Routt and L Anderson for allowing us to use their Step Up program

South Australian Police Service

*Funding for the initial print (version 1) was provided by a Knowledge Exchange grant from the Southern Knowledge Transfer Partnership, which was jointly funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and workplace Relations and Flinders University. Sales from previous versions of the booklet currently fund the revision and reprinting of these resources.*

Permission is given for the production (photocopying) of this publication for the purposes of workshops, seminars etc as long as the original format is retained and due credit is given.

Authors: The Walking on Eggshells Project: Rosalie O'Connor, Jeannette Stott, Mary McKenna, Trevor Cresswell, Sheila Davidson, Sally Fordham, Kay Buckley and Rob Swalling.

To order copies or for more information: Email: [mail@rasa.org.au](mailto:mail@rasa.org.au)

Fifth Edition 2020

*Relationships Australia.*  
SOUTH AUSTRALIA



# Contents

Introduction.....	2
What is it? .....	3
Recognising the Behaviour.....	4
How Does it Affect the Family?.....	5
Taking Action.....	7
Finding Support.....	7
How Friends and Family can Help .....	8
Why Is It Happening? .....	9
A Calm Household .....	10
Promote Calm .....	11
Start a Safety Plan .....	12
Should I Call Police? .....	13
What the Police will do.....	14
Intervention Orders.....	15
Strategies.....	16
Who is Responsible for What?.....	19
Responsibilities .....	20
The Power Struggle .....	21
Seeking Support.....	22
Support Services.....	24
Support For Young People .....	25
Reconnect .....	26
Useful Websites.....	27
Further Information.....	28

# Introduction

*"We are unable to relax...we are walking on eggshells 24/7."*

## **You are not alone!**

Child and adolescent violence and abuse in the family is a very serious issue. It is sometimes called *child-to-parent violence*, *child- to-mother violence*, *adolescent violence to parents* or *parent abuse*. Mothers are most likely to be targets of this violence, however all family members can be at risk.

This booklet offers suggestions and resources for parents and carers who are dealing with violent and abusive behaviour from their children and adolescents.

People who live together in a family may argue from time to time; however, this conflict becomes abusive when one person uses threats, force or manipulation to gain power over the other. Violence is not the same as anger. Anger is an emotion while violence is about power and control.

*Child and adolescent violence in the family exists across all communities, social classes, cultural background and geographic areas.*





## What is it?

Domestic and family violence is a pattern of abusive behaviours by one person against another within an intimate relationship, or within a family including across generations. The behaviours take many forms including physical and sexual violence, verbal abuse, threats and intimidation, emotional and social abuse, stalking, economic deprivation, and property damage. It occurs in all sections of our community, across all ages and all cultures.

Child and adolescent violence in the family is behaviours in which children or adolescents engage which causes family members to feel harmed, frightened or intimidated.

Physical abuse - pushing, hitting, punching, slapping, kicking, throwing things, punching holes in the walls and harming pets.

*“He hit me and I had a black eye so I couldn’t go to work.”*

Psychological/emotional/social abuse - intimidating parents; causing parents to feel fearful; maliciously playing mind games; making unrealistic demands on parents; lying; threatening to injure family members; withholding affection; threatening to run away, harm themselves or to commit suicide.

*“He lies constantly... rings me at work... texts me countless times every day and night demanding money.”*

Verbal abuse is a form of psychological abuse and includes yelling, arguing, challenging, being critical and belittling family members, name calling and swearing.

*“She screams abuse at us.”*

Financial abuse - stealing money or belongings, demanding goods parents cannot afford, incurring debts that parents must cover and destroying property in the home.

*“He ran up a massive phone bill and he expected us to pay. He smashed the glass sliding door when we confronted him with the bill.”*



## Recognising the Behaviour

You may be experiencing child and adolescent violence and abuse when:

- You change your behaviour to avoid confrontation with the young person
- You are fearful for the safety of yourself or other family members
- The young person verbally or physically 'lashes out' at family members causing fear or distress to them
- You feel you are 'walking on eggshells' around the young person trying to 'keep the peace'
- The young person damages or steals the possessions of family members
- The young person threatens you or others, or threatens to hurt themselves or engage in risky behaviour. However, always take threats of self harm seriously
- The young person criticises you all the time
- The young person blames you or others for their behaviour
- The young person is abusive or harmful to pets
- The young person threatens to run away from home if you don't meet their demands.

# How Does it Affect the Family?

As a parent, these are the feelings you may be experiencing:

- Powerless, fearful, angry, frustrated, sad, depressed, guilty, isolated, anxious, despair
- Shame
- Hopeless and helpless
- Exhaustion.

*“Shame, I feel more shame that my son did this to me. How can someone I’ve given birth to lash out at me with no provocation?”*

- You may feel that you are tiptoeing around your child
- You may have lost confidence in your parenting
- Your health and wellbeing may be affected
- You may not be sleeping well
- You may have lost confidence in your parenting
- Your health and wellbeing may be affected.

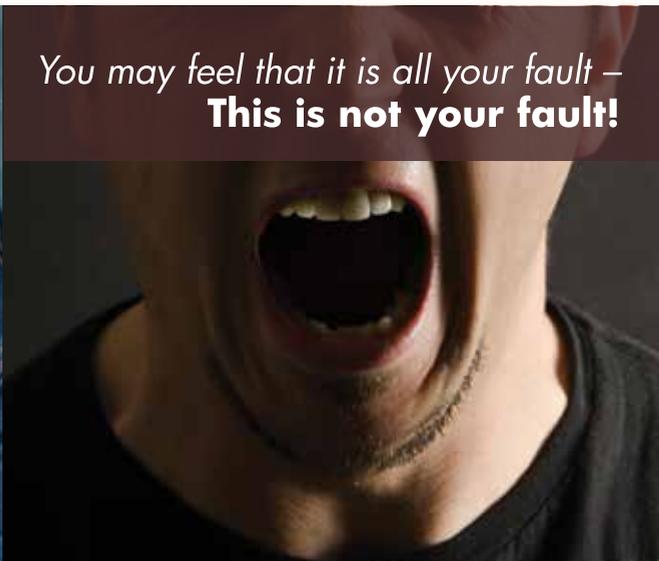
*“Devastated, emotionally ravaged, hopeless.”*

Your work may be affected

- You may have to take time off work because of injuries or because you don’t feel that you can leave your child at home
- You may be too stressed to go to work.



*You may feel that it is all your fault –*  
**This is not your fault!**



## You may feel socially isolated.

- Your child's behaviour may be affecting your social life
- You may be frightened to invite friends or other family members to your home
- You may lose friends.

You may feel that you are not getting useful support from family, friends or agencies.

## The rest of the family are also affected

When the violent and abusive behaviours persist over time, safety for other family members can also be threatened.

Other members of your family may also be experiencing a myriad of feelings.

- Your other children may be feeling  
scared                      helpless                      powerless  
sad                          frustrated                      angry
- Younger children may be afraid to sleep in their own room.

*"My other child misses out because our full attention is on this young person."*

Child and adolescent violent behaviour in the family is a complex issue, particularly when young people:

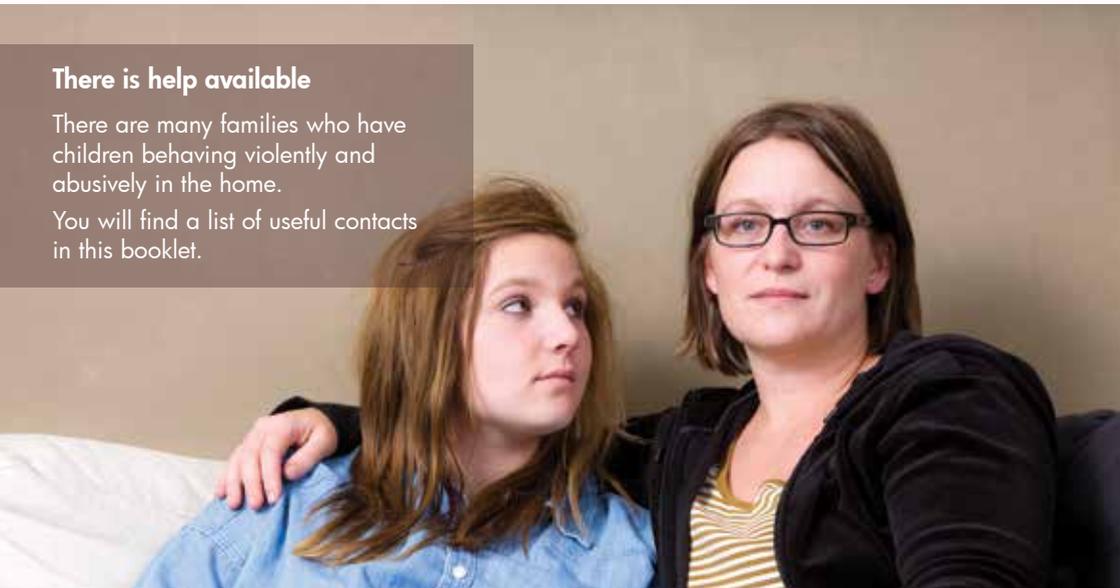
- Have experienced family violence themselves
- Have suffered grief, loss or trauma
- Have an illness or disability.

... *violence is never acceptable.*

## There is help available

There are many families who have children behaving violently and abusively in the home.

You will find a list of useful contacts in this booklet.





## Taking Action

- Acknowledge the problem and don't hide from it
- Naming what is happening is a good start to taking action
- Talk about the violence with someone you trust, such as a friend, family member or counsellor
- Use the contact list in this booklet to identify services
- Plan strategies to deal with the problems
- Seek out support services for you, the young person and your family
- Join an online support group
- Develop a safety plan for you and your family in case you need it
- Be kind to yourself
- Remember: you have a right to feel safe.

## Finding Support.

Although child and adolescent family violence is still not widely recognised in the community, there is help available.

On the following pages are some suggestions for taking a stand to change the young person's behaviour:

- Having a safety plan
- Strategies
- Looking after yourself
- Contact phone numbers
- Involving the police.

# How Friends and Family can Help

Support from friends and family is very important for parents experiencing violence from their adolescent. Both emotional and practical support can be very useful.

Practical support can take the form of:

- Encouraging the parent to make a safety plan
- Helping the parent to find useful resources and services
- Attending counselling sessions or support groups with them
- Accompanying the parent to a social occasion to ease the pressure
- Preparing a meal or providing a special treat for the parent.

Emotional support can take the form of:

- Listening to them and believing what they tell you
- Being empathetic and trying to really understand what the parent is experiencing
- Asking them what you could do that they would find useful
- Expressing your concern for them
- Respecting their privacy
- Encouraging them to care for themselves.

It is equally important to be aware of what is not helpful in these situations if you are trying to offer assistance.

*It is never easy to talk to police about other family members.*

*Talking through your experiences and concerns with one or more of the services listed in the back of this booklet may be a good start.*

## DO NOT

- Tell them what to do
- Blame them or imply it is their fault
- Criticise the way they are managing the situation
- Try to mediate between the parent and young person unless both indicate they would like you to
- Confront the young person.

An understanding support person can make a very positive difference in the life of a parent experiencing violence and abuse from an adolescent.



# Why is it Happening?

## This is not your fault

*“Parents don’t deserve to be blamed.”*

There are likely to be many factors that influence your child to behave violently and abusively. Some influences could be that the young person:

- Is navigating through physical and emotional changes from hormones
- Has witnessed or experienced adult family violence or been abused
- Has seen that violent and abusive behaviour can be a successful way to control others and get their own way
- Is being influenced by peers
- Has mental health or drug and alcohol issues
- Has other health, behavioural or learning difficulties
- Has an inflated sense of entitlement and feels that everyone should cater to their needs and wants
- Has a difficult temperament and is easily angered.

There are no simple answers. There are many and varied explanations and in most cases there are a range of different things that may contribute to the behaviour.

There is no excuse for violence and abuse, but understanding some of the issues affecting the young person may help you to respond in a way that is firm and strong, but also supportive. It may be helpful to remember the things you like and love about the young person that are separate from the violence and abuse.



## Parenting practices

Some parenting practices may inadvertently support the violent and/or abusive behaviour. These include:

- Compensating for family breakup by trying to give the young person everything
- Sacrificing your interests for those of the young person
- Giving the young person too much freedom
- Fear of conflict preventing you taking action
- Parenting that is authoritarian
- Prioritising the young person’s rights over other family members
- Conflict in parenting styles between parents
- Trying to make the young person happy regardless of the sacrifice to you
- Feeling overly responsible for the emotional well being of family members.

# A Calm Household

*Changes in your responses may result in changes in the young person's behaviour.*

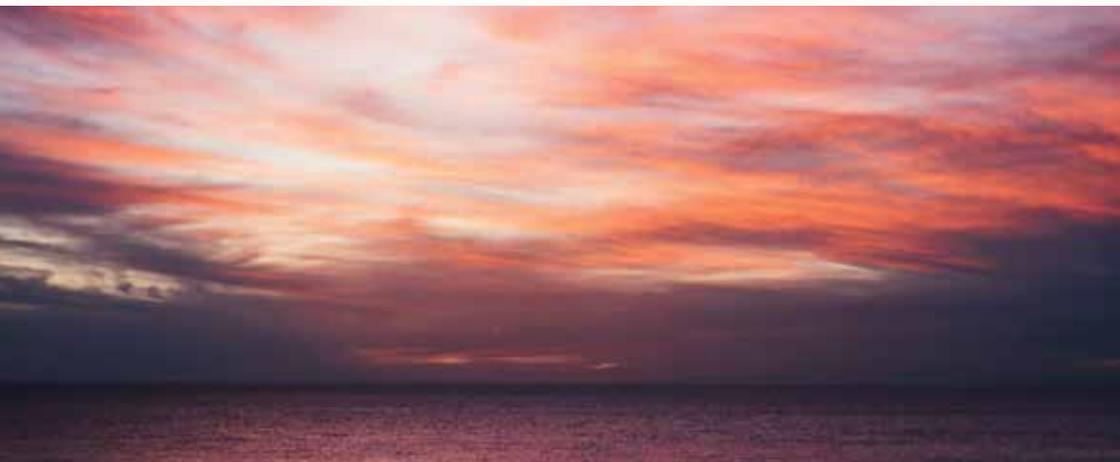
*Caring for yourself and seeking help can help you to regain your confidence.*

## Help yourself to help the family

- Reduce daily stress
- Think about how you have coped with other difficulties and use these resources
- Make sure you eat, rest and relax even if it is only for a short period
- Put your safety as your first priority, not household chores
- Talk to family members and check-in on their wellbeing regularly
- Talk to a trusted person to off load even if they may not be able to solve this
- Reduce intake of alcohol, caffeine or other non-prescription drugs.

## Promote calm

- Stay connected with friends and loved ones - talk to at least one person daily
- Encourage the other children to help you with household chores
- Talk to the other children about safety and support people
- Talk to the other children about practical safety without blaming or shaming the adolescent who is violent
- Reassure the other children their feelings are understandable
- When the other children show you they are scared or worried, validate their feelings
- Remind the other children that everyone in the family is working to keep safe
- Convey the message that things will be better even though they may get worse first.



# Promote calm

## Parenting adolescents can be challenging.

It is not unusual for young people to use challenging behaviours such as arguing, complaining and getting angry as they struggle through the transitions of the teen years.

Violence and abuse are NOT part of usual adolescent development.

Here is a brief review of the characteristics and developmental changes of adolescents to help understand the significant physical, mental and emotional changes young people are experiencing. There is plenty of information about adolescent development to be found, and you may like to start with: <https://raisingchildren.net.au>

## Physical/biological change

More changes occur during early adolescence than at any other stage of development aside from the period from birth to age 2. Their bodies are changing, developing, growing as young people move through puberty.

## Neurodevelopmental/Brain change

Intensive brain remodeling happens during adolescence – and continues into the mid 20s. There is significant growth and development when connections in the thinking and processing part of the young person's brain is pruned, reconnected and strengthened. While all of this is happening, the young person's decision making, impulse control, problem solving and ability to plan and think about consequences is disrupted while the prefrontal cortex is still developing. You may see your young person taking more risks, expressing more and stronger emotions and making impulsive decisions.

## Social changes – identity, individuality, friends and fitting in

Adolescence is the time young people start separating from parents and become more independent – this means that they don't like being told what to do. Include the young person in establishing rules and consequences. If they feel they are listened to and their opinions and ideas are respected, they are more willing to cooperate.

Adolescence is the time young people experiment with different roles and identities. They may have strong opinions and ideas that may change drastically from day to day. If you keep in mind that this is usual to go through this development you can relax and listen with interest.

For young people, how they look is very important – it is part of how they express themselves and how they fit in with peers. Belonging is very important. Young people also express themselves with music, clothes, hairstyles and language which parents can find challenging. Ask yourself: Is it dangerous or harmful in any way, or is it just that I don't like it? If it is not harmful or dangerous, let it go. They will not look like this in three years.



## Start a Safety Plan

It is important to have a safety plan in case you need to leave home suddenly.

A plan of action should include:

*Prevention Steps – what you will do now to prevent harm or injury*

*Intervention Steps – what you will do the next time your young person is violent*

- Think about where you could go and who could provide assistance in an emergency
- Have your car keys and mobile with you at all times
- Make sure you have a list of easily accessible phone numbers
- Ensure you have access to a telephone
- Keep some emergency money aside in case you need it
- Have spare keys for your home and car in a safe place
- Make sure any other children are able to use a phone and know emergency numbers
- Consider putting locks on doors inside the house
- Lock your valuables away
- Arrange a safe place to go to and know how to get there.

If you consider you or other family members are at risk you can apply for an Intervention Order from police. Keep a record of dates, times and brief details about any violent behaviour in case you need to take legal action.

As a last resort, in extreme circumstances, you can ask the young person to leave home.

Contact details for some support services for young people are listed in the back of this book.

*The most effective immediate safety action is to –*

Separate from your young person when they start to escalate

Not engage with your young person

Calmly go to another room or outside and decide what to do



## Should I Call Police?

If you are concerned for your safety or the safety of other family members you should call the police.

**000**      **For all emergencies**

**131 444**      **For non-urgent police attendance.**

Calling the police can help calm the situation, support you to regain control, and begin to rebuild a respectful relationship with your child. Calling the police is a way to hold young people accountable for their violent behaviour. When parents do not call the police after repeated incidents of violence, young people get a strong message that the violence is tolerated.

Many parents hesitate to call the police, even when the situation is critical because:

- They do not want the young person to get a criminal record
- They do not know if the police will take the situation seriously
- They may have had a negative experience with calling the police previously
- They feel guilty.

Calling the police will not necessarily result in a criminal conviction.

*“... police gave excellent advice about coping.”*

*“We have received help from the police on many occasions when violence occurred.”*

# What the Police will do

The police can help calm an explosive situation and protect other family members if needed. The police will provide advice and ask what action you want taken, if any.

## Can a young person be charged?

- A young person aged between 10 and 18 years of age is considered to be capable of committing a crime and is therefore responsible for their actions. Young people of this age are dealt with through the Juvenile Justice System
- Young people over 18 years are considered adults and are dealt with through the Magistrates Court
- Children under 10 years of age cannot be charged, but police can still be called for assistance, advice, and to defuse the situation.

## Taking it further

If you wish to take further action then the young person may be interviewed by police. The police will determine an appropriate course of action in consultation with the parent. Depending on the severity of the offence the actions the police may take are:

**Informal caution:** an 'on the spot' warning by a police officer (no criminal record).

**Formal caution:** administered by an authorised police officer with the young person and guardian present (no criminal record).

**Family conference:** an organised meeting with a Youth Justice Coordinator from the Youth Court, a police officer, the young person and other relevant people in order to determine appropriate consequences (no criminal record).

**Youth Court:** where a charge is laid in court and the case is heard by a Judge or Magistrate. A criminal record results if the young person is found guilty.

You can find more information about the juvenile justice system in the Legal Services Commission Law Handbook in the chapter Children and Young People – Young Offenders online at: [lawhandbook.sa.gov.au](http://lawhandbook.sa.gov.au)

To be dealt with by a caution or conference, the young person must admit the offence.

If the young person does not admit to the offence, no matter how minor, it will be dealt with in the Youth Court. If the offence is serious and the young person is arrested and taken into custody, they can apply for bail. If bail is granted they will be released, but it is likely that an adult person will be required to act as surety.

If there are safety concerns for the parents or family members if a young person returns home, alternative accommodation options for the young person will be explored by the police.



# Intervention Orders

An Intervention Order is an order issued by either the police or the Court forbidding a person from behaving towards you in ways which may harass, threaten or abuse you or which may be violent.

The police can issue an interim intervention order on the spot or can apply to the Youth Court for one.

- Intervention orders can be issued when someone is at risk of being abused
- The abuse does not need to have happened on any previous occasions.

Various conditions can be attached to this order including the requirement that the young person undertake a program dealing with substance abuse, anger control or mental health issues if this is considered appropriate by the court.

For example, intervention orders often forbid people from making contact with another person.

They can be made specifically for you and your situation. You may, for instance, wish to maintain contact but not allow the young person to come to your home or work address. These orders can also stop someone from returning to the family home and can limit how close that person can come to the protected person.

Orders can also contain terms that protect other children in the family affected by the violence and abuse and ensure their continuing safety and security.

## If the young person has a disability

Having a disability does not make it 'ok' for young people to behave abusively. For charges to be laid the court must be satisfied that the young person has the ability to form the intent to commit the offence. Even if laying charges is not appropriate, the police can still be useful in defusing a crisis situation.

***Regardless of the future impact on your child,  
it is important to take action to ensure the  
safety of you and other family members -  
you all have a right to feel safe.***



# Strategies

## Introduce Consequences

Consequences can be an effective way to help young people change their behaviour.

If possible try to involve the young person in the setting of consequences.

Consequences are a way for parents to say:

- We are not putting up with this any longer and we are taking steps to get you to stop.

Consequences help young people learn:

- That their behaviour is their own responsibility, not yours
- About making decisions about what to do
- That when their behaviour creates a problem, it is their responsibility to fix it or make amends
- About the real consequences of their behaviour and allows them to make decisions based on the knowledge of these consequences.

When developing a strategy based on consequences it should be:

- Related to the unacceptable behaviour
- Respectful of the young person and also the parent or others who have been affected
- Reasonable and proportionate to the behaviour.

However, when young people behave violently there is no negotiation.

*There is no excuse for violence and abuse.*

## Setting consequences

Do this when you are feeling strong and supported. Make a plan and think about what you expect from your child:

- What behaviour is reasonable and unreasonable in your circumstances? It is useful to write this down as a reminder
- You may decide that it is unreasonable for the young person to steal money from you and to swear at or verbally abuse family members
- Using 'I' statements can be very powerful. Saying, 'I will not tolerate swearing or verbal abuse from any family members. If you choose to use this language I will not drive you to your friends.' or 'If you choose to steal from me I will deduct what you stole from your pocket money', can help you to feel in control of the situation
- The young person may try to negotiate or undermine you and your resolve. Stand firm! Do not allow yourself to be bullied
- Start conservatively. Focus on the most unreasonable behaviour first. Two or three consequences related to stopping the violent and abusive behaviour is a good start
- Explain to the young person that it is their behaviour that you will not tolerate but you still love them
- If possible, maintain a sense of humour.

## How to choose a consequence

There are two important parts to choosing a consequence for a behaviour:

1. That it is related to the behaviour
2. That it helps the young person fix the problem or repair damage caused by the behaviour.

**For example:** if your young person breaks a door, the consequence will be to repair it or pay to have it repaired.

## Plan consequences ahead of time

- Consequences will vary depending on the severity of the behaviour, so it is helpful to have a list of possible consequences for violent and abusive behaviour
- Whenever possible, let your young person know the consequences for behaviour
- Define the exact behaviour that will be followed by a consequence, eg: not using specific words. The clearer you can be, the less room for argument.

When you are deciding on a consequence for a problem-causing behaviour think about:

### *What is the problem?*

How did the behaviour cause a problem?

### *What is the plan?*

What can be done to deal with the problem?

What can your young person do to help deal with the problem?

## How to deliver a consequence

### **Communicate calmly and directly**

Take a 'time out' if you need to so that you can speak calmly.

A loud voice, warnings, threats, blaming or a hostile attitude will invite conflict.

### **Use as few words as possible**

State the consequence briefly, without explaining and lecturing.

### **Be both caring and firm when communicating consequences**

Firmness means establishing a consequence and staying with it.

Caring means talking to your young person respectfully and calmly without putting them down.

### **What is the problem? What is the plan?**

Always ask yourself these questions to keep yourself focused on how your young person can solve or fix the problem.

### **Present the consequence as a choice that has been made by the young person.**

For example: You have made a choice to repair the cupboard because you damaged it.

You have a choice – talk to me without yelling and swearing, or go into the other room.

It is better to take time to think about it than to come up with a consequence quickly when you are in the middle of the conflict. If you deliver a consequence in the midst of conflict you are likely to give consequences that are unrealistic and difficult to follow through on. Let your young person know that you need to think about an appropriate consequence and you can have your young person think about it as well.

## If you have a young person who refuses to follow through with consequences, change your own behaviour

Despite parents' persistence and resolve, some young people don't respond to consequence. When your young person refuses to follow through on a consequence it is very frustrating and easy to give up.

You cannot make a young person complete a consequence; you can only try to influence them to make the choice to do so.

If you have a young person who refuses to follow through with consequences, stop doing things for your young person that are a privilege, that they care about or that make their life easier such as:

- Providing lifts to friend's places
- Using the car
- Giving them money for fun or phone or internet
- Buying clothes that are beyond basic needs
- Limit paying for phone credit.

Some parents give up on consequence too soon, it may take while to change the behaviour.

Be consistent and continue with the same consequence for a period of time before deciding it is not working – it may take several episodes before you see change.

### Sometimes things will get harder before they get better

- Changing your approach to parenting can be hard. It takes conviction and often practice
- The young person may rebel and intensify the violent and abusive behaviour initially
- You must be prepared to follow through with the consequences you use and the young person must believe that you will
- Ignore the behaviour you can live with—choose your battles
- Start with something simple so that you can have a success to begin with.

# Who is Responsible for What?

## Parents are responsible for...

### Providing basic needs:

Food	Safety
Clothing	Education
Housing	Rules
Healthcare	Guidance
Love	Discipline
Support	Encouragement

### Teaching life skills:

Social skills	Being a positive role model
Support and guidance	Becoming independent

## Young persons are responsible for...

### Their actions and behaviour including:

Following rules	Asking for help
Using skills they have learnt	Fixing problems caused by their behaviour
Going to school	Doing homework
Doing chores	



# Responsibilities

## Reflecting on your responses and beliefs

- Maintain and develop your self-esteem
- Believe that you deserve to be treated with respect
- Reflect on how you respond to the young person
- What are the triggers that cause you to react negatively? Learning to recognise the triggers can help you to change your response
- Develop a calm demeanor. Meditation or other relaxation techniques may help achieve this
- Don't think about your relationship with the young person as a battleground with winners and losers – develop strategies to help build respectful relationships
- Acknowledge the role stress plays in your relationship with the young person. Develop strategies to decrease or diffuse stress where possible
- Celebrate any improvements in the relationship and use any setbacks as a learning experience
- Try to ignore negative outside influences
- Believe in yourself and your parenting ability!

## Encouraging young people to be responsible for their own behaviour

### Notice your young person's effort

- Pay attention to when the young person is trying to do better – catch them being good.

### Notice the small steps and talk about it

- Let the young person know when you see any small improvements in behaviour
- Talk about the specific behaviour you are encouraging in the young person
- Avoid general expressions such as 'You were good today' Instead, be specific: 'You didn't get mad with your brother, you stayed calm and left the room when he was pestering you.'

### Help the young person recognise and express their own feeling of accomplishment

- Acknowledge when your young person feels pleased or proud of something they did
- For example: 'You must feel proud of making it to school every day this week.'

Encouragement can be a challenge when your young person has been abusive or difficult to be around.

Find times when your young person is not being abusive or difficult to give encouragement of them as a person.

Children and adolescents need clear and consistent rules and expectations in order to feel safe and secure.

Although it may be very hard, holding the young person accountable for their actions is teaching them how to behave appropriately.



# The Power Struggle

## When your young person is violent

- Call 000 if needed
- Do not continue the argument. Do not argue or yell
- Don't get pulled into arguing about why they were violent, or who is to blame
- When the young person starts to deny their actions, justify their action, minimise their actions or blame you, don't respond
- The only message your young person needs to hear is that the violence is not acceptable – no matter what
- Don't talk to your young person again until both you and they are calm
- Do what you can to help yourself stay calm
- Separate yourself and your other children from the young person. Calmly go to another room, or if necessary take your other children with you and leave the house
- When you do talk to them, give them the following messages:
  - When you are violent I will separate from you
  - What you are doing is dangerous and it is a crime
  - I won't let your siblings be around you when you do this
  - Your behaviour is not safe and it is not acceptable
  - We need to discuss consequences for your behaviour.

## Tips to help disengage from a power struggle with your young person

- Recognise when it is becoming a power struggle:
  - When you are feeling controlled or feel the need to control,
  - When either of you is arguing, blaming, demanding or being disrespectful,
  - When you feel the need to win.
- Don't Argue
  - Don't get pulled in with arguments about the facts – when, why, where, etc
- Be clear and specific about what needs to happen, then stop talking
- Don't take your young person's resistance or anger personally
- Ignore attempts to get you engaged
- Separate physically from your young person
- Talk about the problem later when you are both calm
- Ask yourself, 'Is this something I am willing to negotiate about?' If so, let your young person know: 'Let's talk about how we can meet halfway on this.' 'Convince me.'

# Seeking Support

You may hesitate to seek support because you have tried before and been unsuccessful in the past. Don't give up!

You are not alone and many people before you have been helped to deal with these problems.

## SAPOL

For an emergency situation 000

For police assistance / attendance 131 444

In the metropolitan area, contact your local Child and Family Investigation Section:

Eastern district 7322 4890 A/H 7322 4800

Northern District 8207 9381 A/H 8207 9411

Southern District 8392 9172 A/H 8392 9000

Western District 8207 6413 A/H 8207 6444

In country areas contact your local police station.

Go to [www.police.sa.gov.au](http://www.police.sa.gov.au) to find your local police station

## Legal Services Commission

Free Legal Helpline 1300 366 424

## Women's Legal Service

Phone advice 8221 5553 / 1800 816 349 [www.wlssa.org.au](http://www.wlssa.org.au)

## To find a private counsellor

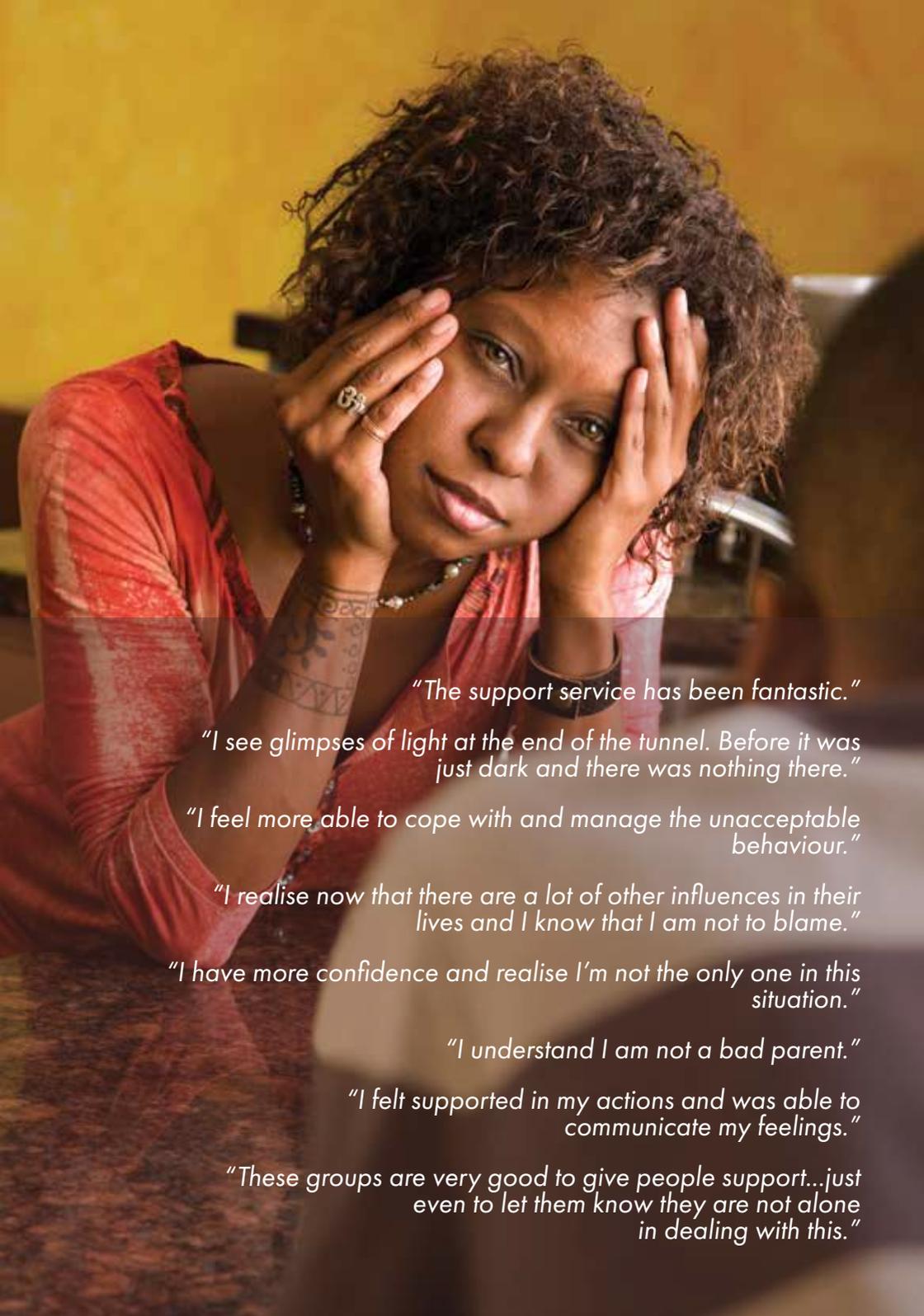
- Search the Australian Counselling Association: [www.theaca.net.au](http://www.theaca.net.au)

or

- Search Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia: [www.pacfa.org.au](http://www.pacfa.org.au)

## To find a psychologist

- Search Australian Psychological Society – Find a Psychologist [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au)
- Speak to your GP about a Mental Health Care Plan which allows you to access a number of Medicare subsidised visits with a private Psychologist.



*"The support service has been fantastic."*

*"I see glimpses of light at the end of the tunnel. Before it was just dark and there was nothing there."*

*"I feel more able to cope with and manage the unacceptable behaviour."*

*"I realise now that there are a lot of other influences in their lives and I know that I am not to blame."*

*"I have more confidence and realise I'm not the only one in this situation."*

*"I understand I am not a bad parent."*

*"I felt supported in my actions and was able to communicate my feelings."*

*"These groups are very good to give people support...just even to let them know they are not alone in dealing with this."*

# Support Services

Women's Safety Services SA	womenssafetyservices.com.au	1800 800 098
Centacare	www.centacare.org.au	8215 6700
Anglicare	anglicaresa.com.au	8305 9200
ac.care	accare.org.au	1300 222 273
Junction	junctionaustralia.org.au	8392 3000
Relationships Australia South Australia	www.rasa.org.au	1300 364 277 1800 182 325
Uniting Communities	www.unitingcommunities.org	1800 675 677
Uniting Communities Ruby's Reunification Program		8202 5060
Uniting SA	unitingsa.com.au	8440 2299
UnitingCare Wesley Bowden	ucwb.org.au	8245 7100
Uniting Country SA	www.uksa.org.au	1300 067 777
Baptist Care SA	baptistcaresa.org.au	8273 7100
Lutheran Community Care	www.lccare.org.au	See website for phone numbers
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) www.wch.sa.gov.au/services/az/divisions/mentalhealth/index.html		1300 222 647
Northern Child and Adolescent Mental Health Country Service Lower North/Pt Augusta/Port Lincoln/Whyalla/Yorke Peninsula		1800 819 089
Southern Child and Adolescent Mental Health Country Service Mt Gambier and Limestone Coast		8724 7055
Riverland		8582 4290
Murray Bridge		8531 3901
Mount Barker		8391 3304

# Support for Young People

While violence is never acceptable there are often underlying factors in young people's lives and your child or adolescent may benefit from support from the following services.

Kids Helpline – free, private and confidential

phone counselling for ages 5 – 25      [kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)      1800 55 1800

---

Headspace      [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)      1800 650 890

---

eheadspace      [headspace.org.au/eheadspace/](http://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/)

---

Youth Gateway – emergency housing and long term accommodation

for young people 15 – 25      [hupa.net.au](http://hupa.net.au)      1300 306 046

---

Youth Health Line (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm)      1300 131 719

---

ReachOut      [au.reachout.com](http://au.reachout.com)

---

Beyond Blue      [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

---

[www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)      1300 22 4636

---

Metropolitan Youth Health

North      8255 3477

South      8326 6053

# Reconnect

Reconnect is a federally funded community-based program supporting young people aged 12 – 18 who are experiencing homelessness/at risk of becoming homeless or experiencing family conflict.

Salisbury Reconnect	8202 5939
Reconnect – Port Pirie	8633 8600
Reconnect – Port Augusta	7628 3119
Southern Early Intervention Service - Onkaparinga	8187 0700
Reconnect – Port Adelaide Enfield	1800 448 999
Whyalla Reconnect	8645 6900
Reconnect Playford	8209 5450
Reconnect Murray Mallee	8532 6303
Reconnect Mental Health Service, Centacare (specialist mental health service)	8159 1400
South East Asian Reconnect (SE Asian specialist – Vietnamese, Cambodian and Chinese)	8213 4605
Aboriginal Prisoners and Offenders Support Services (APOSS) (Specialist Indigenous service)	8201 9813
NAYS (Newly-arrived youth services)	8305 9400

# Useful Websites

**Pathways Network SA** – maintains a directory of a variety of programs/courses  
You can download the Directory of Parenting and Relationships Courses at  
[pathwaysnetworksa.com.au/service-directory/](http://pathwaysnetworksa.com.au/service-directory/)

**Developing Minds** – Helping kids and teens feel calm, confident, cooperative and cope with challenges.  
[developingminds.net.au](http://developingminds.net.au)

**Headspace** – information and resources to support mental health and wellbeing.  
[headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)  
[headspace.org.au/mindfulness](http://headspace.org.au/mindfulness)

## Community Centres

Contact your local Community Centre to see if they are running any program or courses that may be useful. Some Community Centres provide family support services, social workers, women’s groups, men’ groups, support and activities for young people, financial counselling...  
To find your closest Community Centre:  
[www.communitycentressa.asn.au/searchdirectory](http://www.communitycentressa.asn.au/searchdirectory)

## Group programs that run from time to time in South Australia

Follow the Walking on Eggshells Facebook page to see when and where groups are running.

### Step Up for SA

This is the only group program available in South Australia offering support for the parents and the young person together. The goal is to move from abuse to respect.  
The focus of this 10 week program is to help young people learn about the impact of violent behaviours in the family and adopt pro-social behaviours; as well as assist parents with skills to support behavioural change in the family.  
This program offers parents and adolescents a safe environment to rebuild their relationship with mutual respect in mind.

### Who’s in charge?

This is a program for parents and runs over 8 weeks. Developed by Eddie Gallagher, the main goals are to empower parents, reduce stress and guilt and provide concrete strategies to use.

The program focuses on:

- reducing parents sense of guilt and isolation
- developing strategies and consequences
- dealing with anger
- assertiveness and self-care.

# Further Information

## **The Walking on Eggshells Project Facebook page**

[www.facebook.com/walkingoneggshellsproject](http://www.facebook.com/walkingoneggshellsproject)

## **Who's In Charge? Why children abuse parents and what you can do about it**

Eddie Gallagher, Austin Macauley Publishers, 2018 (Book)

## **Eddie Gallagher's Website**

Eddie Gallagher, developed Who's in charge? A parent program specifically designed to help families. Although he is no longer practicing, his website contains useful information:

[www.eddiegallagher.id.au/](http://www.eddiegallagher.id.au/)

## **Holes in the Wall**

An UK Blog which incorporates a variety of international information and research

<http://holesinthewall.co.uk/>

## **Adolescent Violence in the home: Restorative approaches to building healthy, respectful family relationships**

Gregory Rout and Lily Anderson, Routledge, 2014 (Book)

## **Parent Abuse: The abuse of parents by their teenage children**

Published by health Canada this paper provides some very useful information.

View the pdf here: <http://publications.gc.ca/site/eng/9.695721/publication.html>

## **Adolescent-to-parent Abuse: Current Understandings in Research, Policy and Practice**

Holt, Amanda, 2013, Polity Press (Book)



## Emergency Contact Numbers

### **Police Emergency**

000

### **Police Assistance (24 hrs)**

13 14 44

### **Parent Helpline (24hrs)**

1300 364 100

### **Lifeline (24 hrs)**

13 11 14

### **Crisis Care (4pm-9pm weekdays; 24 hrs weekends)**

13 16 11

### **1800RESPECT (24 hrs) – Information, counselling and support**

1800 737 732

### **Domestic Violence Crisis Line (24 hrs)**

1800 800 098

