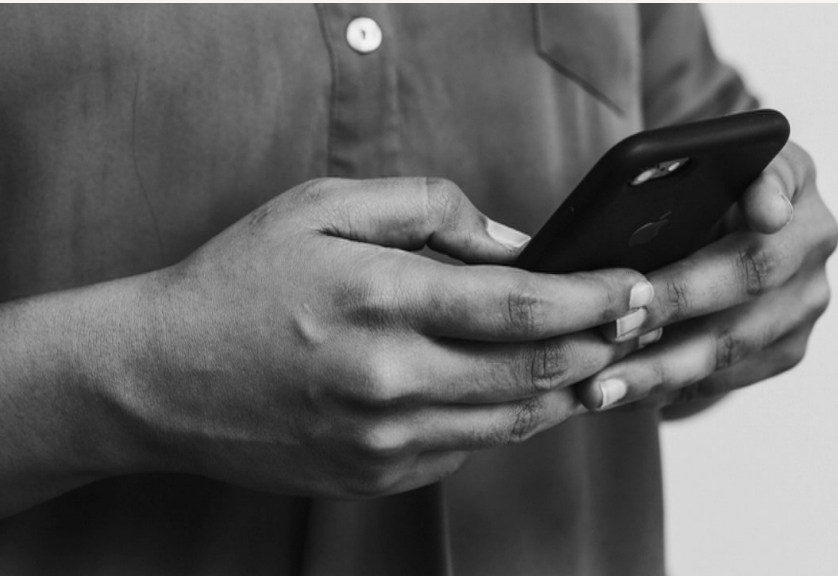


# Dealing with clients who are perpetrating family violence



**It is likely that, if you have clients experiencing family violence, you will also have clients who are perpetrating violence. Both the victim and perpetrator may be your customers, which can be a difficult situation to deal with.**

The main concern should always be the safety of the person experiencing the abuse, avoiding any interaction that may escalate the violence. No to Violence have developed a number of tips to help people engage with perpetrators of violence safely. They include:

**Safety** - The safety of the person experiencing the violence should always be the priority, avoid any kind of engagement that could escalate the violence. Don't engage with the perpetrator in a confrontational or accusatory manner. Avoid using language that is oppositional, challenging or judging. This may cause them to feel shame and anger and begin to resist or disengage, all of which increase the risk of further violence. Do not tell the abuser about anything the victim might have disclosed to you, as it could trigger more violence.

**Don't reinforce violence supportive narratives** - Perpetrators of violence may use strategies to justify, minimise or excuse the violence they inflict on others. Examples of this kind of language include: "I just snapped", "I only pushed her" and "She pushed my buttons". If the abuser tries to minimise, justify or excuse their violence, try to get them to explore and re-evaluate their own behaviour. This should be done in a non-confrontational manner to avoid the escalation of the violence.

**Ask open questions** - Abusers may be imply that violence has occurred while avoiding referring to these incidents directly. They may use phrases like "It just got a bit out of hand" or "I just snapped". By asking open-ended questions, that are not blaming or judgemental, you may be able to shift the focus of the conversation onto their behaviour. An example of this would be "What do you mean it got out of hand?".

**Encourage empathy** - Move the focus onto how the victim is experiencing their behaviour, and encourage empathy for their situation rather than focussing on the perpetrator's intention or identity.

**Change and support** - Focusing on a more desirable future may give the impetus for change. If a conversation reaches this stage, it may be a good time to suggest further support and referral to organisations such as the Men's Referral Service.

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