Getting married brings images of love, affection, caring and support. What will your home be like?

Getting married is a very important decision. Couples who make this commitment have the opportunity and the responsibility to create a home environment that is supportive, loving and secure for all members of the family.

Sometimes this is not the case. For some family members, home can be a violent and terrifying place. It can be a place where family members are demeaned and humiliated. When this happens, it is called “family violence.”

But we’re in love!

It takes more than romance to make your home loving and peaceful. Some people who seem loving and warm are controlling and manipulative the next. It might start with an environment that is supportive, loving and secure for all members of the family.

Once we’re married things will get better!

Getting married is not a magical cure for a hurtful relationship. Once married, many people exacerbate abuse. They may stay and suffer for many reasons. Here are a few:

• They don’t want to break their wedding vows — not realizing that their spouse has already broken the vows.
• They fear being judged by family, friends, church and community — not realizing that these are the very people who can be supportive.
• They feel shame and guilt.
• They love their spouse and hope for change.
• They feel financially secure and have children.
• They fear people will not believe them because their spouse is a good provider, a loving parent and a respected member of society.
• They are not aware of social assistance, legal solutions or support.

Breaking the cycle of violence is not easy. Consider seriously what you will do if you find yourself in a difficult marriage. Remember, the situation might even become dangerous.

Can things change if we really try hard?

Change is not easy. Is there violence or abuse in your relationship now and you decide to get married without seeking help, your home may never be a peaceful place. Consider times like these:

• You can’t change another person — change must come from within. Your partner must admit it is wrong to you. He or she must decide to help and be willing to go for counseling to learn how to avoid abuse.
• Just because your partner says “sorry” and “things will change” does not mean they will. Ignoring insults or hoping it will get better does not work. Things will probably get worse.
• If your relationship doesn’t get better, your children can be affected even if they are not abused. Children who see one parent belittle or harm the other are often anxious and confused.
• They may even lose respect for the parent who is in abuse. Moreover, they are more likely to find themselves in abusive relationships later on.

Your partner may blame you for everything. Most abusive persons eventually do use physical force. It may involve emotional abuse such as constant insults and put downs or isolating you from family and friends. It might be subtle like not letting you grocery shop or taking more serious forms such as threats to harm you, the children or your property.

Is your partner...?

If you answer yes to these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship.

If your partner insistson controlling all the household money, it can lead to financial abuse by forcing you to completely depend. Abuser can also include sexual assault if there is unwanted or forced sexual touching and activity. This can happen even in a marriage.

All these forms of abuse are wrong and some, such as physical and sexual assault, are even criminal. Most abusive persons eventually do use physical force.

If your partner is controlling all the household money, it can lead to financial abuse by forcing you to completely depend. Abuser can also include sexual assault if there is unwanted or forced sexual touching and activity. This can happen even in a marriage.

What can I do if I answered YES to these questions?

Get help and make sure there has been real change before you go ahead with marriage. Talk to someone who can tell you about your options. Reach out for help. There are resources available as well as people who take family violence seriously! These might include:

• family counselling or mental health clinic
• domestic violence worker
• family doctor or public health nurse
• school guidance counsellor
• employee assistance program
• police or RCMP (if you are being physically or sexually assaulted)
• your local transition house
• victim services office
• lawyer or domestic legal aid

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick

P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1
Email: pleisnb@web.ca

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick

www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca

www.theraveproject.org — a women's and violence education initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action togetherto assist families of faith impacted by abuse.

www.theraveproject.org — a women’s and violence education initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action togetherto assist families of faith impacted by abuse.

www.theraveproject.org — a women’s and violence education initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action togetherto assist families of faith impacted by abuse.

www.theraveproject.org — a women’s and violence education initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action togetherto assist families of faith impacted by abuse.

www.theraveproject.org — a women’s and violence education initiative that seeks to bring knowledge and social action togetherto assist families of faith impacted by abuse.