

It's A Bit Weird, Actually

Topics: friendships, partnerships, family violence, gas-lighting, sexually transmitted debt

Summary

In this video Mona visits her friend Sofia and expresses concern about way Sofia's partner is behaving. Their conversation provides Sofia with some clarity about her intimate relationship.

Commentary

Mona does not offer advice and does not judge Sofia. Instead she provides the support for Sofia to come to her own conclusions about her relationship with Ben through:

- ▶ Inviting Sofia to talk through her concerns about Ben's behaviour
- ▶ Actively listening to Sofia and validating her strengths
- ▶ Inviting Sofia to reflect on whether she actually wants a car herself
- ▶ Identifying that anyone can be a perpetrator of family violence (FV)
- ▶ Inviting Sofia to think about Ben's behaviour in the context of FV through explaining gaslighting and sexually transmitted debt (STD)



Family Violence and Financial abuse

In a partnership, family violence (FV) involves one partner using power and control to limit the opportunities, dignity and freedom of the other partner. It includes a range of controlling and abusive behaviours that may never involve physical violence, but which have a negative emotional and psychological impact. FV can occur between partners but also in other family relationships or in any family-like relationship.

Financial abuse is a form of FV. In Australia, almost 16% of all women and 7% of all men will experience financial abuse at some point in their lifetime. People do not experience financial abuse because of poor money skills – financial abuse happens when one person has made a decision to exert financial and power over another.

TAKE 1 REFLECTION:

1. How does Mona provide support to Sofia?

2. What strategies does she use that are particularly helpful?

WIRE conversation kit

Talking to a friend who you think may be experiencing family violence

The following points are a guide on how to talk about FV to a friend –who may be speaking about it for the first time.

- ▶ **Ask how the person feels.** Do they feel that their partner/family member/carer/house-mate has power and control over them? Do they feel safe?
- ▶ **It's important to name the behaviour, but it is also to respect where the person is emotionally.** They may not want to recognise the behaviour as abusive.
- ▶ **Be aware that people often feel high levels of shame about FV.** They may be thinking 'how did this happen to me?' They may be blaming themselves; in FV situations the victim-survivor often takes responsibility and is blamed by the perpetrator.
- ▶ **They might be trying to excuse the person's behaviour.** Make sure you do not supply or support excuses. There is never an excuse for FV.
- ▶ **Accept that the only person experiencing FV can make the decision to leave.** There are many reasons why a person may stay in a relationship including complex emotions, the needs of children, or having no income. They may share a friendship network with the perpetrator or see them as family.
- ▶ **Provide non-judgemental support.** Listen to their experience and comment on behaviours and the impact rather than making judgements that are shaming. It's not helpful to say 'You always choose emotionally abusive partners'.
- ▶ **Affirm the person's strengths and agency.** Often people experiencing FV have been criticised and undermined in their relationship.

Free support and further information

If your friend is still living in an abusive relationship, they should delete their browsing history after using these sites, and change all their passwords. FV can escalate when the person using violence suspects that the person they are abusing is seeking help.

- ▶ [WIRE](#) - 1300 134 130
- ▶ [Safe Steps](#): 24/7 family violence response service
- ▶ [1800 Respect](#) 24/7 phone counselling service - 1800 737 732.
- ▶ [Orange Door](#): Family Violence hubs

Migrant & refugee background people

[inTouch](#)

LGBTIQ+

[With Respect](#) & [Thorne Harbour Health](#)

Getting help for financial abuse

It may be possible to get assistance with overdue bills or debts. To find out more contact a financial counsellor on National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007 (Monday to Friday, 9.30am–4.30pm) <https://moneysmart.gov.au/managing-debt/financial-counselling>

For information on your legal rights and accessing Intervention orders:

[Victorian Legal aid website](#): & [Magistrates Court of Victoria](#)

Online & Digital safety

[Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria](#) & [e-safety women](#)