

## Health and wellness initiatives - Lunch and Learn

***‘How can we feel safe in our homes?...I’m asking for a friend’***

**Associate Professor Elisa Zentveld**

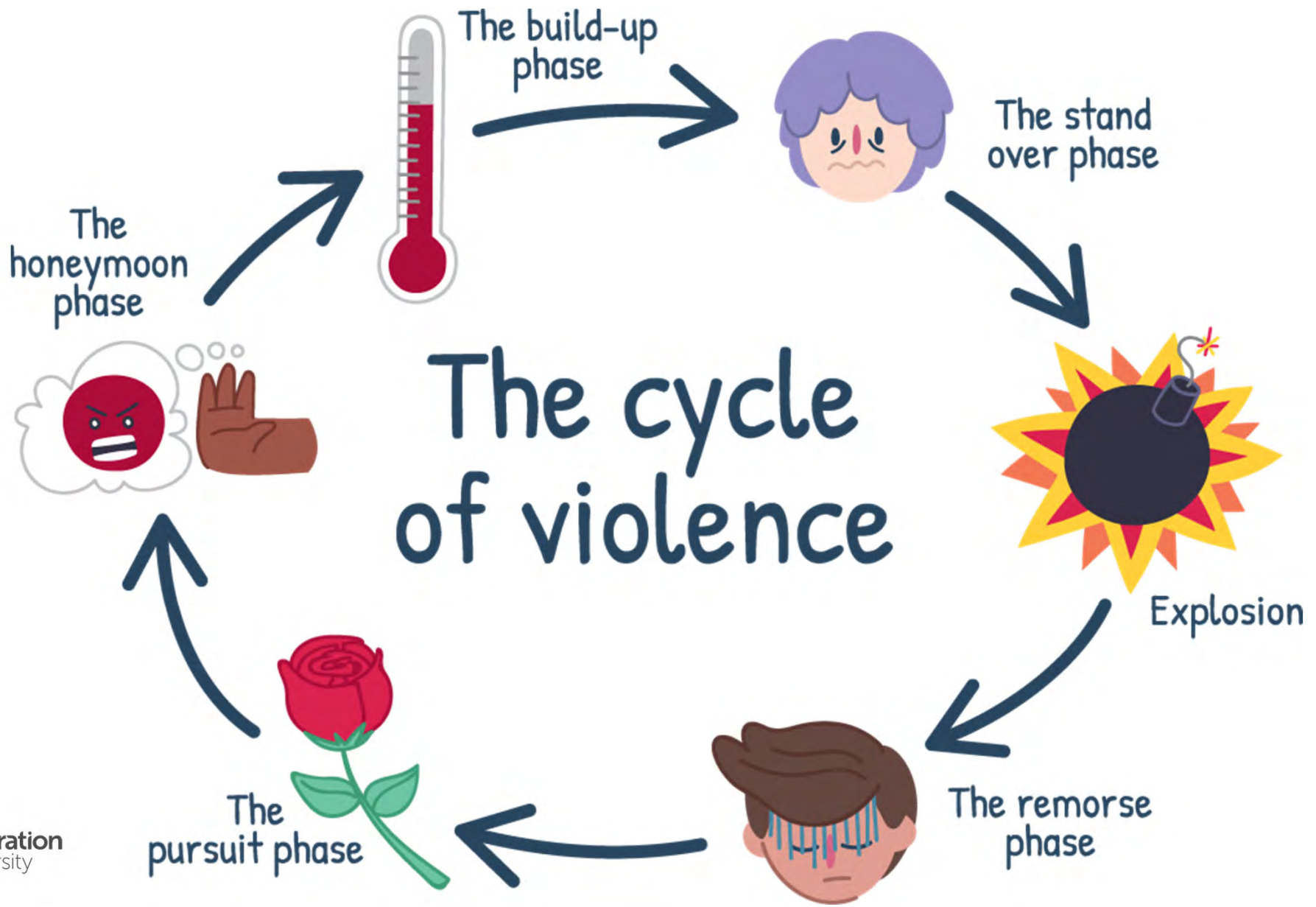
**Dr Jess Cadwallader – Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee**

29 September 2021

# How can we feel safe in our homes?...I'm asking for a friend

## Overview of key points to discuss

- Snapshot of Family Violence
- Family Violence and Family Law
- Family Violence and the role of Family and Friends
- What about the children?
- How can we recognise the signs of family violence?
- In lockdown with an abuser: How can we reach out when the victim is in the same house as the perpetrator?
- What supports are available?





*from*  
**2012**

**THE**  **AGE**





**Current  
snapshot  
of Family  
Violence as  
pandemic  
lockdowns  
continue**

# Current snapshot of family violence

## Police-recorded incidents of family violence in Victoria



Source: Crime Statistics Agency/Victoria

# Current snapshot of family violence

- Family violence increases during disasters
- Recessions and unemployment impacts mental health, relationships and parenting which are recognised risk factors for FV
- Job losses from COVID-19 disproportionately impact women's employment





“When lockdown hit, I just lost total control of my environment”

“I feel like I have been smudged out”

**Women’s poverty and disadvantage after family violence is higher in regional Australia**

Maya\*, 49 years old, from the Gippsland region, was the managing director of her own company for 20 years.

Whilst Maya’s husband was abusive during the marriage, his financial and technological abuse increased after separation.

First lockdown imposed in Victoria in early 2020. "It was no longer possible to stay with people, go to a cafe or sit in the library and work. I was stranded — even the public toilets were closed"



# Family Violence and Family Law

# Family Violence and Family Law

- Legal Processes for separation
- Mediation
- ‘Equal shared parental responsibilities’ versus ‘time with’
- Intervention Orders
- Further and better particulars
- Name changes for children





**Family  
Violence  
and the  
role of  
family and  
friends**

# Marriage Counselling



**Marital counselling often focuses on the violence as a product of the couple system rather than oppression of the woman**

**Source:** Hattendorf & Tollerud, 1997, Domestic Violence: Counselling Strategies that minimise the impact of secondary victimisation, *Perspectives in Psychiatric care*

## Support within FedUni

- FedUni Employee Assistance Program **1300 687 327**
- Family violence support line **1300 338 465**
- Many of our student-facing policies and procedures have been updated to better reflect family violence

**The  
perfect  
crime**



*"for 1 in 5 child abuse cases, family and friends were aware of the violence but did not report it"*



# What about the children?



# Family violence is traumatic for children

Children can be impacted by:-

- Hearing a parent being verbally abused
- Seeing a parent's injuries from physical abuse
- It is harder for a victim of family violence to deal with parenting challenges



**What about the  
children?**





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### **Evidence-based serious risk factors:**

- New baby/pregnancy (assault during these circumstances is serious risk)
- Planning to leave or separate (escalation risk)
- Escalation in violence
- Controlling behaviours
- Access to weapons
- Strangulation/choking
- Threats to kill or harm victim survivor, children or pets
- Stalking
- Threats or attempted self harm or suicide
- Sexual assault of victim
- Obsession/jealousy towards victim
- Unemployed/disengaged from study
- Drug or alcohol use

### **Signs you might spot include:**

- They're not coming to events anymore (and it's not because of restrictions)
- They check their phone frequently or anxiously when out with you
- They're not in contact as often as they used to be, or there are other signs of isolation
- They seem evasive or defensive of their partner
- They have a pattern of physical harm (bruises etc) especially over time
- They seem scared, depressed or unlike themselves
- They seem not to have money they used to have even though their financial circumstances seem the same



**In lockdown with an abuser**

# In lockdown with an abuser

Some suggestions:-

- Check in with them frequently
- Arrange to meet them as part of errands or chores
- If you are concerned for their safety, consider calling the police to do a welfare check
- Arrange a safe alternative form of communication, like a free email account that she only accesses via the web on her phone.
- Create a code word that can be used to let you know they need you to get help.
- Help them develop a safety plan: <https://www.dvrcv.org.au/help-advice/guide-for-families-friends-and-neighbours>
- **Whatever you do, don't judge!**





**What supports  
are available?**

# Supports you can access

All specialist family violence services continue to operate during Covid-19 lockdowns.  
If you are concerned for someone's immediate safety, call 000.



**Safe Steps** is Victoria's 24/7 Family Violence Response Centre. You can get in touch with them any time of the day or night, every day of the year, on 1800 015 188.

## The Orange Door in Central Highlands

provides access to support and services for people at risk, including for family and domestic violence or abuse, and for families needing extra support with the wellbeing and development of children.

- 9am-5pm Monday-Friday
- 1800 219 819



**Berry Street** runs a Statewide On Call Service in Central Highlands which will connect you to the 'After Hours program' and a specialist family violence worker in Central Highlands.

- 5pm – 9am Mon-Friday
- Saturday and Sunday
- (03) 5331 3558





# Covid-19 and Family Violence – What’s coming?

## COVID-19 IS A GENDERED PROBLEM

During the COVID-19 crisis, women are experiencing **higher levels** of depression, anxiety and stress than men.

**35%**

of females have moderate to severe levels of depression, compared to 19% of males

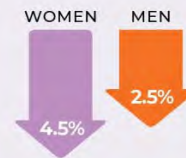
**27%**

of females have moderate to severe levels of stress, compared to 10% of males

**37%**

of women aged 18-24 report suicidal thoughts, compared to 17% of men

55% of job losses due to COVID-19 are women.



**\$205 BILLION**

VALUE OF UNPAID LABOUR BY VICTORIAN WOMEN  
DELOITTE REPORT 2019



WOMEN ARE DEPLETING THEIR SUPERANNUATION AT A HIGHER RATE THAN MEN WHEN WITHDRAWING EMERGENCY COVID-19 FUNDS.

MAJORITY OF THE CASUAL WORKERS UNABLE TO ACCESS JOBKEEPER ARE WOMEN.

WOMEN ARE PERFORMING FAR MORE OF THE UNPAID LABOUR AND ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT IN THE HOME DURING LOCKDOWN.

THE PAYROLL IMPACT ON WOMEN HAS BEEN GREATER THAN MEN ACROSS MANY INDUSTRIES.

DURING LOCKDOWN, WOMEN ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO HAVE FELT:



TO THE WOMEN'S MENTAL HEALTH CLINIC AT THE ALFRED HOSPITAL IN ONE MONTH.

The majority of essential workers have been women and are in the **lowest paid jobs.**



A GENDER EQUAL RECOVERY REQUIRES GENDER EQUAL SOLUTIONS



- Natural disasters increase the levels of family violence – Ballarat has seen an increase of more than 40%
- When gender inequality is increased, family violence increases
- Family violence is likely to increase over the coming years
- Recovery should be tailored to address this
- Supporting victim survivors or holding perpetrators to account is key, and this is everybody's business
- BUT 'turning off the tap' is vital!
- We can all contribute to a more equal community – the CoRE Alliance can support you: <https://whg.org.au/our-work/prevention-violence-women/core/>



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# Thank you and questions?