

# West Cork Whisper

West Cork Women Against Violence Project Newsletter

44th Edition

July, August, September 2011

## Publication of New Booklet by **TREOIR:** “*Cohabitants – new legal rights and obligations for opposite and same sex couples*”

**T**reoir, the National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and their Children, has recently published: “*Cohabitants – new legal rights and obligations for opposite and same sex couples*” where the rights and obligations of cohabitants contained in the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 are explained.

Information on the Redress Scheme is provided– a scheme that is available for certain financially dependant cohabitants at the end of their relationship (whether through separation or death). Clarity is also offered on Cohabitant’s Agreements (where cohabitant’s have a written agreement on their financial affairs, this will be recognised at the end of their relationship whether through separation or death).

The term cohabitant is described as:  
“opposite or same sex couples who are:

- Living together in an intimate and committed relationship
- Not married to each other
- Not in a registered civil partnership (which is only available to same sex couples)
- Not related within the prohibited degrees of relationship

and also if you have been cohabiting

- For at least 5 years or 2 years if you have had a child together and
- Are financially dependant on the other cohabitant.”

One can obtain a copy of this booklet by contacting:  
Treoir on 1890 252 084  
the Treoir website on <http://www.treoir.ie/publications>

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## Break the Silence on Domestic Violence

West Cork Women Against  
Violence Project,  
Harbour View,  
Bantry, Co. Cork.

Freephone Helpline:  
Tuesday 10am - 4 pm  
Tel: 1800 203 136

Office: Tel: 027 53847  
Open: 10am-1pm,  
Monday - Friday

Website:  
[www.westcorkwomensproject.ie](http://www.westcorkwomensproject.ie)

Email: [admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie](mailto:admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie)

# Recovery After Domestic Violence

Survivors of abuse progress through healing in different ways which makes recovery unique for each individual. However, there are some reactions to trauma that are common and normal. We hope this article can help you to better understand what you may be experiencing.



**I**n the initial aftermath, feelings may include confusion, anger, guilt, shame, embarrassment, depression, loss of control, numbness or shock. You may have difficulty concentrating. Your thoughts may race. You may find yourself reviewing and reliving what occurred or asking unending questions such as “why me?”. Sleep disturbances, nightmares and flashbacks of the assault are also very common. You may or may not experience physical symptoms. If you do experience physical symptoms, they can include soreness, muscle tension, headaches, fatigue and gynaecological problems. It may seem like your whole life has been disrupted and is focused on the assault. Although these are normal reactions to trauma, they can be very distressing. *“Women who have experienced domestic violence are more likely to experience mental distress or be diagnosed with a mental health condition. The most common mental health problems resulting from domestic violence are depression and post – traumatic stress disorder”* (Golding,J (1999); Campbell JC, Seken K. “Women’s responses to battering over time; an analysis of change. Journal of interpersonal violence).

You may feel preoccupied with thoughts of the assault. You may notice that you experience unusual thoughts, feelings and/or behaviours and that you may not be acting “like yourself”.

Some of these experiences may include:

- Increased alcohol and/or drug use ;
- Keeping to yourself, isolating from friends and loved ones;
- Increased fears (of leaving your home, of being at home alone, of people or certain places);
- Suicidal thoughts;
- Avoiding work or overworking;
- Increased irritability;
- Engaging in risky behaviour;
- Change in eating habits (not eating or over-eating);
- Change in sleep pattern (unable to sleep or sleeping too much);
- Flashbacks or nightmares.

## Recovery After Domestic Violence

After a few days and weeks, you may need to appear as if everything is fine. You may not want to talk about what happened and want to “just forget” that it happened. This can serve a useful purpose for a while. It can be a coping mechanism, allowing you to function in your life. Unfortunately, the reality is that we don’t usually “forget”. The discomfort may appear to be gone, but can re-emerge in unusual ways.

The process of realisation and change is often slow. When trying to change your circumstances, you are also often coping with crisis events. These situations may need to be more stable before other issues can be addressed. Some women are surprised and frightened to find that their feelings seem to get worse when things are falling into place.

This can be because it is only then safe enough to start processing the emotional and psychological consequences of what they have been going through. Women who have experienced domestic violence commonly feel badly about themselves, their world and the future. These negative thoughts have a profound impact on how you feel and can in effect re-enact the abuse. The thoughts come from remembering unkind things that were said and believing they are true.

All of these reactions can be normal responses to trauma. It can be helpful to recognise that you are reacting to an abnormal and serious event (an assault). When you notice that you are not acting “like yourself”, remind yourself that it may be related to what happened. While we cannot undo the past, it is possible for you to choose what is meaningful for your life now. Negative thoughts can be questioned and challenged. It takes time to be able to do it and is hardest to do at the beginning but don’t give up as this change is possible. Be gentle and patient with yourself, and do whatever you need to do at this time to reclaim your life and feel safe. Remember, you can seek help by contacting a Support Service in your area. The first step may be calling a helpline. Helplines are there for you to talk to someone about your worries. The person at the other end of the line will listen to you, and often she / he will be able to put you in touch with services or support groups in your area.

**“There is a past which is gone forever but  
there is a future which is still our own”**



**Offering support on the  
journey to recovery**

**Freephone Helpline 1800 203 136**

We offer an appointment and court accompaniment service

Once a relationship starts becoming abusive it's never going to stop. Before you get too involved you should get out. Once he puts his hand on you or abuses you once it's going to continue. I don't care what they say about anger therapy and stuff. Personally myself, I don't think that works. I think if it's in them it will be in them.

Rebecca

**“Living to tell the tale ... as told by survivors of domestic violence”.**

**Domestic Violence Response,  
Oughterard,  
Co Galway.**

## Know your basic rights in a relationship

1. The right to receive goodwill from the other person.
2. The right to receive emotional support.
3. The right to be heard by the other person and the right to be responded to with courtesy.
4. The right to have your own view even if your partner has a different one.
5. The right to have your feelings and your experience acknowledged as real.
6. The right to have a sincere apology for any jokes you feel are offensive.
7. The right to clear informative answers to questions that concern what is legitimately your business.
8. The right to live free from accusation and blame.
9. The right to live free from criticism and judgement.
10. The right to have your work and your interests spoken of with respect.
11. The right to receive encouragement.
12. The right to live free from emotional and physical threat.
13. The right to live free from angry outbursts and rage.
14. The right to be called by no name that devalues you.
15. The right to be asked respectfully rather than to be ordered.

## SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN:

West Cork Women against Violence Project,  
Bantry ..... **Freephone 1800-203 136**

Women's Aid Freephone ..... **1800-341 900**

Cuanlee Refuge, Cork ..... **021-427 7698**

Legal Aid Board, Cork ..... **021-455 1686**  
..... **021-427 5998**

Mná Feasa  
(Domestic Violence Project) ..... **021-421 1757**

OSS Cork ..... **Freephone 1800-497 497**  
(Domestic Violence Resource Centre  
for men and women)

Sexual Assault Treatment Unit. .... **021-492 6297**

Sexual Violence Centre ..... **Freephone 1800-496 496**

Domestic Violence Social Work ..... **021-492 1728**

Y.A.N.A. North Cork ..... **022-53915**

### Kerry

Kerry Women's Refuge and Support Services  
(ADAPT) ..... **066-712 9100**

Open Door Network ..... **066-718 5472**  
Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre ..... **1800-633 333**

Legal Aid Board ..... **066-712 6900**

Tralee Women's Resource Centre ..... **066-712 0622**

## WEST CORK CITIZENS' INFORMATION SERVICE

**The Square, Bantry. Ph: 027 52100**  
**South Square, Macroom. Ph: 026 42179**

*West Cork Citizens' Information Service can provide you with information, advocacy and advice on all your rights and entitlements. The service is free, confidential and independent. Open daily, please call for times.*

### LEGAL AID BOARD

3rd Tuesday of month 10.30am – 4.30pm

**For an appointment with the Legal Aid Board please phone the Legal Aid Cork office on:  
021 4551686.**

### FREE LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC (F.L.A.C.)

1st Tuesday of month 6pm – 7pm

**Appointments for F.L.A.C. are made by contacting the West Cork Citizens' Information Service via drop in or telephone 027 52100.**

### MABS OUTREACH CLINIC:

Each Friday 10 am – 11.30 am

**Phone MABS at 023 55155 for an appointment.**

**THESE ARE CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES**

We offer an appointment and court accompaniment service.