Shield PNG

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MIGHT RESORT TO VIOLENCE



If you have hit, threatened, forced or frightened the woman you live with, this is for you.

You can stop. Men do.

But not by deciding to be better, and not by reading this. Here is what it actually takes.

It is a choice, not a reaction

You will have reasons. You were drinking. She provoked you. You were under pressure from your wantoks. Money. Her family. Her mouth. Every man in your area faces the same pressures and most of them do not do this. You chose. The good news in that is simple – what you chose, you can choose differently.

Bride price did not buy her

If somewhere in your thinking is the idea that payment was made and she is therefore yours to discipline, that is the thing you have to take out. People who work with men like you, right across this country, say it is the single most common belief standing between a PNG man and stopping.

Being a Big man is not this

The men in your community who are genuinely respected are not respected for what they do at home behind a closed door. You know which men those are. Nobody is frightened of them and everybody listens to them.

Your children are learning

Your son is working out what a man does. Your daughter is working out what she should accept. They are learning it now, from you, whether or not they are in the room when it happens.

What to do when you feel it starting

1 Learn your own warning signs

Most men have them – the heat in the chest, the jaw, the particular thought that arrives just before. You know yours.

2 When it starts, leave

Say you are going, and go. Walk. Do not take the car and do not go drinking. Stay away until you are genuinely calm, not until you have finished arguing in your head.

3 While you are out, slow your breathing

In through your nose for four, hold for seven, out for eight. Four breaths, no more than that in a row. It works because you cannot stay that angry and breathe that slowly at the same time.

4 Come back when you are calm

This only works if you actually come back.

5 What will not work

Promising her. Promising her in front of her family. Promising God. Giving her money. Every man who has ever done this has promised, and promising is part of the pattern, not the way out of it.

6 Do not use this against her

Do not tell her you are reading something and therefore she should stay. Do not tell her you are changing and therefore she owes you. Do not use the words in this resource to argue with her. If that is what you are planning, you are not stopping – you are getting better at it.

7 If there is a gun in your house and you cannot be sure of yourself, you already know what that means

This is not someone from outside telling you how to live. In July last year the Deputy Prime Minister told a gathering in Lae that people should not only look to government to fix this, and that it is every man's responsibility to make sure he does not commit violence against women and children. The Prime Minister has called it an epidemic and asked why this country turns a blind eye to what happens to its own wives, daughters and sisters. They are talking about you and they are talking about me.

The law is changing. Papua New Guinea's new ten-year plan on violence includes behaviour change programmes for men and rehabilitation ordered by a court for first-time offenders. The window in which nothing happened to men who did this is closing.

Get help, because reading this is not enough. Call Community First PNG on 714 71518 or 765 85653. They are counsellors, they take calls from men, and they are confidential. Talk to a pastor or a leader who will tell you the truth rather than take your side. Find other men who have stopped and stay near them.

If you cannot stop, leave. Not as a punishment and not as a threat. If you have tried and you are still doing it, move out and stay somewhere else for a while. That is not failure. It is the one thing you can do today that definitely makes her safer.

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