

Economic Abuse - What Is It?

Economic abuse (often called financial abuse), is recognised as a form of family violence. It can occur in any close personal relationship, particularly intimate partner relationships. It may also be experienced in the form of elder abuse.

Economic abuse can impact all ages, socio-economic groups and gender, but may present differently in some cultures due to traditions and beliefs, or the systemic experience of decolonisation.

It does not always align with physical violence or leave marks – it's less visible, but the impact can be debilitating and often continue long into the future.

"Everyone believed our relationship was good. I did the budget and looked after the money, but I had to have approval from him - and if there wasn't enough money for the things he wanted, I would get yelled at. Somehow it was my fault"

Economic abuse is often intentional, but not always. Like other forms of violence, it can be subtle, begin with the smallest breach of trust, and build over time. It is most evident when a specific pattern of behaviour is occurring – such as coercion, withholding financial access or support, deceptive behaviour or unreasonable control that limits another persons' economic or financial involvement.

"I wanted to work, but he kept finding more and more things for me to do at home. He wanted me to be like his mother, keep the house in a certain way and bake and always be home to make his life comfortable"

"He was taught by his Dad to manage the money, he would tell me how our money would be spent, and I would have to ask if I wanted or needed anything for myself or the children. This is how he believed it was in every family"

When economic abuse is occurring, there can be restrictions around how you acquire, use and maintain money and economic resources such as accommodation, employment and clothing. Some people who use these tactics repeatedly dictate their choices and control everyday actions, becoming violent or threatening to become violent if their demands are refused.

Economic Abuse – Getting Support

If your safety is at immediate risk, please ring the Police – 111

Family Violence

Women’s Refuge New Zealand – 0800 733 843 (crisis line) or womensrefuge.org.nz

Shakti – 0800 742 584 (24-hour, ethnic support) or shakti-international.org/shakti-nz

Shine (Auckland) – 0508 774 633 or 2shine.org.nz

Aviva (Christchurch) – 0800 28482 669 or avivafamilies.org.nz

Are you ok - 0800 456 450 or areyouok.org.nz

Family violence Information Line - 0800 456 450 (9am-11pm every day)

Support for Men - menshealthnz.org.nz/support-for-men

Legal

Community law - communitylaw.org.nz

Citizens Advice Bureau – Phone 0800 367 222 or www.cab.org.nz

Youth Law – (under 25years old) – Phone 0800 884 529 or youthlaw.co.nz

Financial

Sorted – Phone 0800 345 123 or sorted.org.nz

Money talks – Phone 0800 345 123 or text 4029 – moneytalks.co.nz (live chat on website)

Good Shepherd NZ – (no interest and low interest loans throughout NZ) – goodshepherd.org.nz

To find more services in your area

Family and Community Services directory familyservices.govt.nz/directory