Myths about the survivor/victim

Myth: Violence affects few women in Australia
Truth: High numbers of women experience violence in Australia. The Vic Health Report (2004) found that intimate partner violence is the biggest cause of injury or death for women in Victoria aged between 18 and 45 years.

Myth: Domestic and family violence happens only to poor, uneducated women and women from certain cultures
Truth: People of any class, culture, religion, sexual orientation, marital status and age can be victims or perpetrators of domestic violence. Because women with money usually have more access to resources, poorer women tend to use community agencies, and are therefore more visible.

Myth: Some people deserve to be abused; are responsible for the violence or they provoke it
Truth: No one deserves to be abused. The only person responsible for the abuse is the abuser. Abusers tend to blame the victim for their behaviour, and friends and family often hear only their perspective.

Myth: If the victim didn’t like it, she would leave
Truth: There are many reasons why a woman may not leave, including fear for herself, her children and even pets. Often women face significant practical barriers to separating from their partners, including a lack of money and housing options. Due to the effects of the abuse, many women lack confidence in their own abilities and accurate information about their options. Not leaving does not mean that the situation is okay or that the victim wants to be abused. The most dangerous time for a woman who is being abused is when she tries to leave.

Myths about the abuser

Myth: Most people who commit violence are under the effects of alcohol or drugs
Truth: Although many abusive partners also abuse alcohol and/or drugs, and some are more likely to be physically violent or use more extreme violence when their judgement is impaired, this is not the underlying cause of the abuse. Many people who abuse alcohol or drugs are not violent and abusive.

Myth: Abusers are mentally ill, psychopathic or have a personality disorder
Truth: Research does not support this view. Most men who use violence against family members demonstrate acceptable behaviour in other settings. Many are considered respectable members of the community, and other people are often reluctant to believe they could be abusive.

Myth: Stress and anger lead to violence
Truth: Violent behaviour is a choice. Perpetrators use it to control and dominate their victims, and their actions are very deliberate. Usually perpetrators of domestic and family violence are never violent outside the home or in public, even when under stress.

Myths about the violence

Myth: Domestic violence is a personal problem between a husband and a wife.
Truth: Domestic violence affects everyone.

Myth: Domestic violence occurs only in a small number of heterosexual relationships
Truth: Domestic violence can occur in any intimate or family relationship, including same-sex relationships, between older or adult children and parents, between siblings, and between people...
with disabilities and their carers. Approximately one in three women in Australia will experience domestic or family violence in their lifetime.

**Myth:** Violence is about anger and rage. The abuser is out of control

**Truth:** Family violence nearly always happens in private, with no witnesses. Perpetrators do not generally abuse their workmates or bosses, regardless of the amount of stress they experience at work. Very often abusers hurt victims in parts of their bodies where the injuries won’t show.

**Myth:** Domestic violence is usually a one-off, isolated incident caused by anger or stress

**Truth:** Domestic and family violence is a pattern of behaviour that includes the repeated use of a number of tactics designed to dominate and control a family member. These can include threats, intimidation, isolation, economic and financial control, and psychological and sexual abuse. Physical violence is only one of the tactics used to control another person.

**Sources:**
(The material in this fact sheet was adapted from http://www.safeplace.org/page.aspx?pid=336)