Responding to people who use violence

Someone may tell you that they use violence with their family or someone close to them.

Remember that you do not have to respond to them if you do not feel comfortable. If you do not want to engage with them, you can provide them the number to the **Men's referral service on 1300 766 491**.

If you decide to respond, please consider the following:

- It is not always clear when someone is using violence. They may ask you for relationship advice or tell you about their marital conflict, so listen carefully to any warning signs of domestic and family violence

- Make sure there are others in the meeting, or that it is in a space that you can leave easily if you feel unsafe

- Show gratitude if they are taking accountability by seeking your advice, but make it clear that using violence is never acceptable.

Avoid:

- Justifying or trivialising any abusive behaviour

- Referring them to couples counselling or anger management classes. This is inappropriate for people who use violence with their families

- Arguing with them or shaming them, even if you feel angry with them. It may increase their use of violence and discourage them from seeking help

- Mentioning anything a victim-survivor has reported to you. This may threaten their safety.

This conversation guide shows how to approach a conversation with someone who uses violence.

It's recommended that you:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Encourage empathy
- Encourage taking accountability

Conversation guide

They might say:	"They made me so angry, I just snapped!"
To respond with an open-ended question, you can ask:	**"What happens when you snap?"**
Their response:	"I raise my voice. Sometimes I throw or break things."
To encourage empathy, you can say:	**"How do you think your other family members were feeling?"**
Their response:	"I'm not sure they might have been scared, but my partner always makes me lose it."
To encourage accountability, you can say:	**"Thank you for telling me. I am concerned, and I believe the way you were behaving is wrong. If you're ready, I can help you access support."**