

VICTORIA WOMEN'S

Transition House SOCIETY

Supporting Women and Children fleeing intimate partner violence and abuse

What is Abuse?

Intimate partner violence and abuse impacts women throughout our community, women with or without children, including women who have been in short-term or long-term relationships and women of all ages. Abuse comes in many forms and leaves deep and lasting marks. Abuse includes but is not limited to:

- Emotional abuse such as criticisms and put downs
- Physical violence such as being held down, pushed and hit
- Sexual violence such as unwanted sex
- Threats against the woman and/or her children
- Financial control
- Controlling or isolating the woman by not letting her see friends or family
- Destroying property or harming pets

Help is available. Victoria Women's Transition House offers emergency shelter, counselling, support, and education so you can make safe decisions. For more information **250.385.6611** or **transitionhouse.net**

Did You Know ...

- On average, a woman is killed by her intimate partner every 6 days in Canada
- Indigenous women are killed at 6 times the rate of non-indigenous women
- On any given night in Canada, over 6,200 women and children sleep in shelters because it isn't safe at home
- 67% of Canadians know of a woman who has experienced physical or sexual abuse
- Each year in Canada, up to 362,000 children and youth are exposed to violence in the home
- 3-5 children and youth in every school classroom are exposed to domestic violence

Statistics from Canadian Women's Foundation



Thank you for EVERYTHING you do! If it hadn't been for the care of Victoria Women's Transition House, I would NEVER have built the solid, incredible life I have now! ~ VWTH client

Tara and Justin, Ellen and Mark *

**Names are changed for privacy*

Back in the spring, we shared a story about two young couples that were impacted by the pandemic and their very different responses to the stresses and uncertainty of the situation. Here are their stories:

Tara* and Justin* were a happy couple with three school-aged children. They both worked and the children went to school. But when COVID-19 arrived in their community, everything changed. Tara and Justin were both laid off from their jobs and their children's school closed.

Suddenly, this happy, healthy family was in isolation together, with little privacy and personal space in a small house. They worried they would catch the virus. Finances were uncertain. The children struggled with their schoolwork. Emotions ran high and the stress was building. Those small annoyances and irritations of each other's habits, as well as the children's typical sibling bickering, were suddenly magnified. It was tough.

Thankfully, before long, Tara and Justin could see what was happening. They decided to have a family meeting and discuss what needed to change. They agreed to create daily routines and develop a family plan that encouraged understanding, empathy, kindness and patience with each other and with their children.

Now imagine the same scenario with an abusive partner, like Mark*.

Mark requires a sense of control and is possessively jealous. He constantly monitors his partner, Ellen*, and their three children in their small home. He controls the phone, the computer and all activities. His behaviour is unpredictable: loving and funny one minute; verbally abusive and explosive the next. Ellen loves Mark but her feelings are complicated. She felt isolated and controlled before COVID-19, and now it's almost unbearable. She doesn't feel safe bringing her concerns up for a discussion. Isolation is a controlling tool for an abuser, and right now, Mark is taking full advantage of this.

Before the pandemic, statistics showed that in Canada, one woman was killed every six days from gender-based violence. In the first month of the pandemic, nine Canadian women and girls were killed in what is believed to be domestic homicides.

Research shows that there are factors that increase the rates of violence against women. Pandemic-related stressors such as job loss, reduced income, food shortages or food insecurity, concerns about contracting the virus, mental health issues, as well as disrupted routines can all contribute. Isolating in our home means that abusers and those they harm, are in close contact all the time, and others are not around to see the violence or to provide assistance. And even though isolation measures were lifted in the weeks and months following the lockdown, abusers like Mark will never let Ellen have complete freedom.

Of course, many of us, like Tara and Justin, are facing stresses during COVID-19 and are not responding by abusing those closest to us. Violence is not inevitable. But if violence factors at home already exist, then "pandemic triggers" can make the abuse even worse.

This is why it is so important to know that help is available.

Safety for women and their children at emergency shelters like Victoria Women's Transition House (VWTH), and counselling support for women, for older women and for children who witness abuse, are all here. Compassionate staff will help a woman with a safety plan and connect her to shelter supports and counselling services, for her and her children. With few modifications, all the Victoria Women's Transition House services are still operational during the pandemic.

Thankfully, Tara and Justin and their children and thousands of families like them are managing in these challenging times - one day at a time, with love, care and compassion. For others, like Ellen and her children, there is hope. The VWTH 24-Hour Crisis and Information Line is always open and shelter services are available.



I simply cannot convey how humbled I am by your expression of generosity and I will be sure that my children know how they have been blessed by the kindness of your organization and those that support it. Thank you deeply for all that you do to help the families that require your services.

~ Mother of three who stayed at the Emergency Shelter

Why I Give

At 31, after two marriages and three years of CUSO volunteering in Jamaica, I returned to Victoria, clear that being a white, educated woman in Canada conferred both privilege and a responsibility to help women in need. As a teacher-counsellor, I worked with families who had first-hand experience with our organization. Although financial help was an obvious contribution, I have treasured memories from over the years when I took my mother to the VWTH office with toiletries and toys as Christmas gifts for



Transition House clients. Now, there are a multitude of VWTH programmes available for those touched by abuse, from Camps for children who witness abuse, to services for older women courageously seeking support. Inspired by the resilience, energy, humour and compassion that women show for each other, I'm proud to be part of such a vibrant community.

Beverly is a VWTH Sustaining (monthly) Donor

The identified individual has given their permission for photo publication. Others are models.



Department of Justice Canada

Ministère de la Justice Canada

We acknowledge and thank the Department of Justice Canada for making this publication possible, as part of Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2020.



Our Mission

Victoria Women's Transition House Society (VWTH) collaborates, advocates and educates to address and prevent intimate partner violence and abuse of women and children through supportive shelter, housing, counselling and other community-based services.

How to Reach Us

Crisis and Information Line
250.385.6611

Community Office
Suite 100 3060 Cedar Hill Road
Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

- ☎ 250.592.2927
- 📠 250.592.2995
- ✉ info@vwth.bc.ca
- 🌐 transitionhouse.net
- 📱 @VWTHS

Charitable No. 10817 3501 RR0001

Victoria Women's Transition House is a registered charity and donations are gratefully appreciated.

Give online at **transitionhouse.net** or call **250.592.2927**, Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm.

We need your help now more than ever! Thank you.

24-Hour Crisis & Information Line: 250.385.6611