



An Update from Victoria Women's Transition House

It has been a challenging few months. Considered an essential service, Victoria Women's Transition House continues to provide emergency shelter, counselling, supports and services with some modifications, heightened sanitation procedures and physical distancing. Our staff are working hard to continue to support our clients throughout the pandemic, expanding our counselling options to include support through a newly launched, secure, digital platform. We are very excited about this addition to our services and have already received positive client feedback on the accessibility of this supportive resource. Looking ahead, our organization will "flex" our service delivery as needed and continue our commitment to provide safety and support to women and their children impacted by gender-based violence and abuse.



Supporting Children and Families During COVID-19

The **PEACE/Children Who Witness Abuse** counselling team has been busy adapting their services to online delivery to help support vulnerable children and families who are healing from domestic violence and abuse.

Many families are experiencing extra stress and tensions during the pandemic and all too often children are deeply impacted by the conflicts that arise. Counsellors are now able to connect with children and youth through a secure, digital video platform.

To help clients stay engaged in their home, counselling staff have hand delivered activity packages to families.

Participants in the **Girls' Group** have received packages full of art supplies, treats and journals. Girls will soon be meeting once a week, as a group, via video. Each group will begin with a facilitated check-in and then a



topic explored by participants through both discussion and artistic expression. Topics will include self-identity, emotions and how to express them during the pandemic, and future goals and aspirations.

Boys' Group will follow a similar plan and a parenting and

caregivers' group, **Helping Children Heal**, will be launched shortly.

Our Mission

Victoria Women's Transition House Society 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

P 250.592.2927

F 250.592.2995

E info@vwth.bc.ca

W transitionhouse.net

Charitable No.
10817 3501 RR0001



Elder Abuse Day

June 15 marks Elder Abuse Day, a day to honour our elders and support healthy aging and inclusive communities.

Stopping the Violence Women's Counselling

The Victoria Women's Transition House Stopping the Violence counsellors have been busier than ever, providing support via phone to women who have left or who are currently living with an abusive partner. Many clients are single parents who are facing new financial strains and struggling with isolation while raising children. While many of us are also struggling during COVID-19, those impacted by intimate partner violence and abuse can have heightened stress and anxieties.

Survivors need to find ways to move forward, an integral part of healing from abuse. With many community programs and activities on pause, moving forward is not easy.

Right now, one of the biggest challenges for clients is to co-parent with an abusive ex-partner. With access to the courts limited due to COVID-19, it is difficult to navigate custody disputes and harder to get protection orders. For these clients, access to professional trauma-

informed counsellors is important, as counsellors can assist with safety planning and offer compassionate support. Talking with a counsellor can help clients connect with their needs and find ways to move forward.

If you need help, please reach out:
24-Hour Crisis & Information Line - 250-385-6611

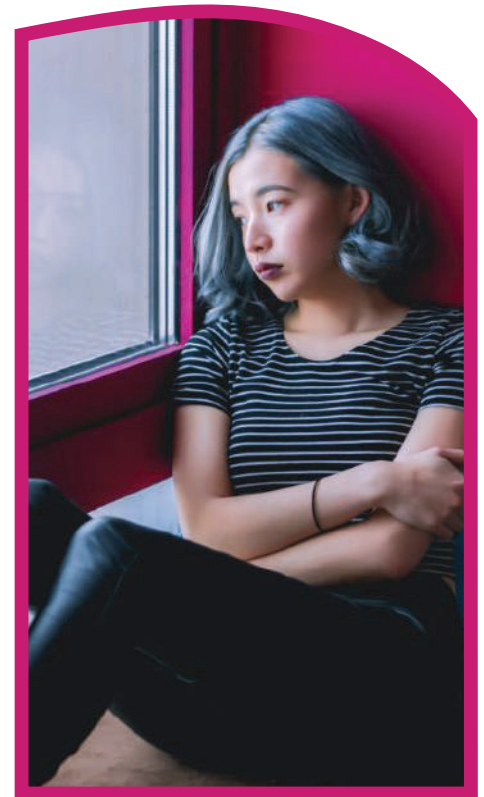
Why Does She Stay?

In our work, we often encounter folks who ask - "Why does she stay in an obviously abusive relationship?" The answer is complex. But by understanding the many barriers that a woman faces when she considers leaving an abusive relationship - psychological, emotional, financial or physical threats - we can begin to support and empower her to make the best decision for herself and her children, while holding abusers solely accountable for the abusive behaviour. Here are a few of the reasons why a woman may hesitate before leaving an abusive and violent relationship:

- **Danger and Fear:** An abuser's verbal threats and actions can increase over time, and he can become more violent if the victim tries to leave. A victim's fear is very real - there is a huge rise in the likelihood of violence after separation. She lives in a world of constant terror.
- **Isolation:** A perpetrator works to weaken a woman's connections to family and friends, isolating her and making it extremely difficult for a victim to seek support. An abuser will often try to reduce a woman's contact with the outside world, preventing her from recognizing that his behaviour is abusive and wrong.

Isolation leads women to become financially and emotionally dependent on their controlling partner.

- **Shame or embarrassment:** Perpetrators can be seen as well respected or liked individuals in their communities because they know how to be charming and calculating. This prevents people from recognizing the abuse and isolates the woman further. The perpetrator will minimize, deny or blame the abuse on the victim. Victims may be ashamed, so they will make excuses to themselves and others, to cover up the abuse.
- **Trauma and low self-confidence:** Imagine being told every day that you are worthless and the impact that this has on your self-esteem. Victims have limited freedom to make decisions, they are often traumatised, regularly told 'you couldn't make it on your own, you need me'. They believe they have no choice but to stay.
- **Practical Reasons:** Abusers often control every aspect of their victim's life, making it difficult to have a job or financial independence. By controlling access to finances, a woman is unable to support herself



or her children. She may fear becoming homeless, having her children taken away or, even being deported, if she has an insecure immigration status.

Victoria Women's Transition House has skilled staff to offer non-judgemental service, support, information and resources; walk a woman through a safety plan; and determine if space is available in our Emergency Shelter. We are here to help. 250-385-6611.

Self-Care

We all know the importance of practicing self-care during times of high stress, but it can be hard to know where to start. One of the VVTH counsellors has a few suggestions:

Keep It Simple: We are all living in a very overwhelming situation, so it's important not to add more stress by expecting that we're going to be mastering new hobbies and excelling at self-care. Focus on simple, small tasks that bring you joy. Often, self-care just means doing more of what already works for you. Perhaps that means taking a slightly longer shower or bath, enjoying a good cup of tea with a treat or going for a walk with your dog in a new park.



Daily Routines: For many, the pandemic has led to experiencing a loss of control. Focus on things that you can control, such as a daily routine, to help manage stress and anxiety. Perhaps this means getting up at the same time every morning, or scheduling a regular Zoom chat or social distance walk with a friend.

Establishing a routine for yourself and your family can help create a sense of normalcy and comfort when little feels normal.

Stay Connected: While physical distancing remains critical, so is connecting with friends and family from a distance. Whether that means more phone calls, virtual meet-ups, or social distance walks, staying connected greatly improves mental health and wellbeing.

Why I Give

Over the years, I developed strong empathy for the women needing shelter from my own experiences in a previous marriage where I was controlled, criticized and financially cheated. My children were emotionally affected despite my efforts to protect them and this makes me think of all the serious hardships the women at the Victoria Women's Transition House may have experienced.

~ Gramma Helen

It takes a community to help make a difference and assist women and children - those impacted by gender-based violence. Our thanks to all of you for your contributions, including a kind and generous Grandmother for her wonderful support. Thank You.

From Our Clients...

Here some words of thanks from five appreciative women:

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! ~ L.

Just wanted to tell you I am grateful for all you do – changed my life, saved me, helped me, hugged me. I felt I mattered. Thank you for your kindness. ~ G.

I felt myself confident again, I'm recovering my strength, I start to find the person who I was looking for that was lost. Thanks for the support. ~ A.

Thank you so very, very much for all the time you have spent listening, to my problems, my frustration and my tears. I will not forget the sympathy you all showed me. Thank you again. ~ K.

Thank you for all your help and support through everything. We (my kids and I) are blessed to have such wonderful people in our lives who have helped us through the rough journey we have faced this past year. With your support we have found housing, furniture, emotional support, and so much kindness. Thank you so much! ~ N.



Territory Acknowledgement

It is with much respect to the Lkwungen and SENĆOŦEN speaking peoples of the W̱SÁNEĆ, Esquimalt, and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories the Victoria Women's Transition House Society is located, that we make this acknowledgment with the expressed shared hope to live in communities free of intimate partner violence.



With Our Thanks



Since the beginning of this pandemic, we have seen our community come together in truly heartwarming ways. So many of you have reached out with grocery gift cards, laptops, essential supplies, gifts and treats for clients, and individuals, companies and organizations have offered financial support during this extremely stressful time. Thank you!

Thank you also to **Bolen Books** and **Bonnie Campbell** for the generous book credit, **Phillips Brewery** and **Nezza Naturals** who provided us with hand sanitizer, **Mary Kay Ash Foundation** for the essential items and financial donation, **Carolyne Taylor** from **YoUnlimited** and "Alice" for the hand-made face masks, and the **Modern Real Estate Team** for the client care packages. A big thank you to the **Camosun College Culinary Arts Program** and **Soup Sisters** for the donation of delicious soup for our clients, to Augustus Krantz of **Brasserie L'ecole** and Bradley Hamar of the **Tartan Toque** for the Easter dinners, and to the staff at the **Royal & McPherson Theatre Society** for their massive donation of concession treats for our clients.



Our deepest thanks also to **Peninsula Co-op** for supporting our PEACE children's program and to the **Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General/Civil Forfeiture** for supporting our Family Legal Advocacy Program. Thanks to funds from the **Women's Shelters Canada**, we are able to hire an additional Outreach Worker. In addition, thank you to **Victoria Foundation**, the **Times Colonist**, **The Jawl Foundation** and hundreds of community donors for incredible generosity supporting VWTH through the **Rapid Relief Fund**. And to all of you who came forward with your spring donation before we could even ask - THANK YOU ALL!

YES! I wish to support Victoria Women's Transition House

I would like to give a gift of:

\$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 Other \$ _____ A tax receipt will be issued for all donations over \$10

Mail: 100 - 3060 Cedar Hill Road Victoria, BC V8T 3J5

Online: Visit transitionhouse.net and click on Donate

Phone: Call 250-592-2927 to make a credit card donation

Enclosed is my cheque payable to Victoria Women's Transition House

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Cardholder Name: _____

Signature: _____

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VICTORIA WOMEN'S
Transition House
SOCIETY

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