

#### Lived expertise

Current responses to domestic, family and sexualised violence predominantly position the responder as 'expert' rather than the victim-survivor. This is at odds with evidence

The National Risk Assessment Principles for domestic and family violence outlines seven principles. Principle 3 states that 'A survivor's knowledge of their own risk is central to any risk assessment.

Insight Exchange resource, Follow My Lead is designed to reveal the expert perspectives of victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexualised violence (DFSV) about their own lives and what is important to them now and next.

#### Reference:

Toivonen, C., & Backhouse, C. (2018). *National Risk Assessment Principles for domestic and family violence: Quick reference guide for practitioners* (ANROWS Insights 10/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS

Follow My Lead - Animation and Booklets
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#### **Creating possibilities**

Listening to lived experience insights is not enough. Our responses to what we hear through that listening is what makes the difference – socially and systemically. So, what can we do to shape a world that listens to <u>and</u> is led by victimsurvivors insights and experiences of violence and abuse?

This resource focuses on valuing what victimsurvivor's fears tell us about perpetration of, and lived/living experiences of violence and abuse.

'Fear' is typically understood to be a key measure of the likely harm the perpetrator will cause. Yet, the absence of 'obvious' fear, is wrongly and uncritically assumed to mean the absence of threat and risk of harm.

Understanding and valuing victim-survivors' lived expertise and their specific **reasons to fear**, informs and improves the quality of our responses.

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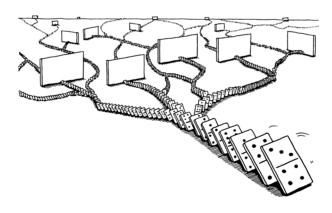
Uplifting Responses (page 32)



If you have been subjected to threats or experiences of violence and abuse, and you are afraid, it is important to know that responding with FEAR is not

- a problem of the mind or perspective
- a personality problem
- a sign of weakness
- illogical
- unreasonable
- paranoid
- delusional
- selfish or self-centred.

Responding to threats or experiences of violence and abuse with fear is appropriate and proportionate – victim-survivors have reasons to fear.



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#### **Purpose of this resource**

This reflection resource is designed to support critical analysis of how we understand and ask about fear as a measure of meaning, significance and severity of domestic, family and sexualised violence.

The resource is designed to support responders to move from measuring the 'state of mind' of the victim-survivor, to asking about the life/living of a victim-survivor.

As responders we can better understand victim-survivors many **reasons to fear**, when we explore what victim-survivors are having to do, not do, give up and go without to be able to survive and lead their lives.

This resource includes experiences of and resistance and responses to violence and abuse.

#### Introduction

Risk assessment tools commonly include questions about victim-survivors 'fear'. Yet, many responders uncritically use the measure of 'fear' to understand violence, danger and threat. Victim-survivors are often pathologised as 'anxious' and 'fearful' or socially heralded as 'fearless' but in reality have many **reasons to fear**.

Victim-survivors reasons to fear vary because experiences of and resistance to violence are unique and situational.

As responders we can more consciously and conscientiously adjust how we explore and make meaning about victim-survivors reason/s to fear.

We can move from making assumptions about fear toward understanding the lived/living experience of reasons to fear. We can recognise fear is not a 'problem of the mind or perspective' but a **response to violence**.

When we focus on victim-survivors reasons to fear, and how victim-survivors know to be afraid, we better understand:

- the intensity and pervasiveness of violence perpetrated against them
- the perpetrators responsibility for the violence
- victim's ever-present, resourceful and enduring resistance and responses to violence.



### **Status Quo:**

The concept of 'fear' is used pervasively throughout domestic, family and sexualised violence response and prevention work. For example, the perceived presence (or absence) of victim-survivors' fear is often used by first responders, such as Police, to distinguish the victim-survivor from the perpetrator (Wangmann, Laing & Stubbs, 2020).

Many domestic and family violence risk-assessment tools ask responders (e.g. Police, Emergency Department Staff, Social Workers) to assess the level or intensity of fear a victim-survivor is experiencing.

#### Two examples:

Some responders in Australia use the Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Tool (DVSAT).

Part B of the DVSAT includes the following question directly naming 'fear':

How fearful is the client of their partner? (Select one)



Not afraid

**Afraid** 

**Terrified** 

Unable or unwilling to answer

What concerns did the client express?
What did the client think the partner might do and to whom?

https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/\_\_data/asse ts/pdf\_file/0005/41873/Domestic-Violence-Safety-and-Assessment-Tool-DVSAT.pdf Some responders in New Zealand use the Ontario Domestic Assault Risk Assessment (ODARA).



One of the 13 items in the ODARA includes the following question directly naming 'fear':

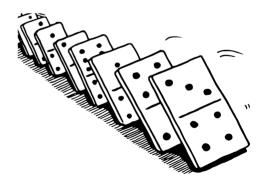
\_\_\_ Victim fears (is concerned about) future assault

https://grcounseling.com/wpcontent/uploads/2016/08/domesticviolence-risk-assessment.pdf Domestic, family and sexualised violence is often defined by the fear experienced by the victim-survivor. For example, Section 4AB of the Australian Family Law Act (1975) (Cth) defines domestic and family violence as "violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person's family (the family member) or causes the family member to be fearful".

Most Australian State and Territory legal and policy definitions of domestic and family violence emphasise victim-survivors' fear; "family violence is behaviour that controls or dominates a family member and causes them to fear for their own or another person's safety or wellbeing" (State of Victoria, Australia, Family Safety Victoria, 2021).

Under section 16 of the Crimes (Domestic & Personal Violence) Act (2007), courts can issue an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) when "a person who has or has had a domestic relationship with another person has reasonable grounds to fear and in fact fears the perpetrator will perpetrate violence against the victim-survivor, use threats, intimidation and/or stalking."

These examples highlight the statutory emphasis on victim-survivors' fear and how the professional judgement of a victimsurvivor's fear can mediate access to legal and other supports.

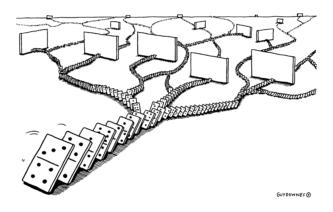




How will we notice 'how afraid' a person is?

Do we understand that a person has reasons to fear based on their expert knowledge of their situation?

What are we expecting to 'find' and 'find out' *inside* the mind of the victim-survivor when we ask about 'feelings' of fear?



We might hear varied descriptions (like the examples on the following page) however these insights are not always safe to share nor asked about.

These descriptions alone don't mean we understand the full significance of harm done and likelihood of more threat and violence.





"very scared"

"terror in my voice"

"petrified"

"incredible sick feeling"

"freaked out"

"we all felt threatened"

"felt paralysed with fear"

"shaking"

"living in fear"

"intensely petrified"

"terrified"

"actual fear of what he could do to my loved ones"

"always scared"

"intimidating and scary"

"we still live in fear"

"actually petrified"

"constantly looking over my shoulder"

"ongoing terror underneath"

"deep fear and dread"

"frightening"



<sup>18</sup> excerpts are descriptions of fear within victim-survivor led narratives.

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#### Maryam

When I was living with him, I was so scared. Every day, as soon as I would hear his car pull up in the driveway, I would start shaking.

I told the court I'm so afraid of him. He has threatened me and my children so many times.

My kids all say, "I'm so afraid of him. Oh, he's so dangerous." There were so many times he took out the chopping knife. He ran around the house with it threatening us. He is very dangerous. I stood up to him, I was very strong at that time. But he used to push me.

Last year he thought I was having an affair. He called the police about 32 times and he was getting the kids to call the police against me. He was a very smart man. Whenever the police came around, every time he would tell the kids "if you say anything, I will kill your mum". Even if he killed me the children would have said "no he didn't kill her". They were terrified of him.

It's a game. He can murder anyone. He knows how to play games. I'm so afraid of that man. He can do anything.



#### Deb

I didn't fight the assault charge because I didn't want to be in the same room as him in the courts. I can't even look at him. And I'm due in court again soon for another mediation and I don't want to be in the same vicinity as him. I am petrified.

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#### Deepa

Once, Jayesh actually kicked me and my kids out of the home. I had nowhere to go so my kids and I went to the police station. I didn't give any written statement but I said that I needed to go back to my home. But I was also scared to go back.

Jayesh is saying that I'm stopping the kids from seeing him. But I'm not stopping the kids at all. My kids said, "we are not going with you dad", because they were just too scared of him.



#### **Amira**

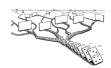
The Police re-arrested Grant. He said that he didn't go back to the house to do anything to me. But the point was he had broken his bail conditions and if Leisha and I were there, he would've done something to me or both of us. He was quite an angry person and his intent was to go back there. He still has the keys, he still lied, he still made a story up. It has been quite frightening.

\*\*

I said to Leisha through the door, "if Grant is hurting me, go next door and call the neighbour and ask them to call the Police". I know she was terrified. She said "I can't do that" and so I said, "that's fine, don't worry about it". Because Leisha was frightened that if Grant came down and she was next door, that she was going to get in trouble.

\*\*

We have already spent months living in fear worrying about what's going to happen. When he gets out, he's going to be so cranky. We have not had any break from that because even though he is in jail, we still live fear.



#### **Amrita**

Whenever he went out, he locked us in the house. I was always scared. Goodness knows what time he used to come home

I did not get out of the transition home at all, not even to see a lawyer. That's how scared I was.

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#### Tamara

I was quite scared that Sam or Sam's family would just turn up at Bobby's school and take him. They all knew where he went to school, So, I changed Bobby's school.



#### Sally

I think a little bit was baby brain, certainly, at the beginning. But it was very much because I was terrified. Terrified of not knowing what he was going to do to me next.

The thing that frightened me most was seeing that he had such black anger and hatred. I don't know where it came from.

On the surface I had this level of functionality but it also becomes a problem because, functionally, everything's fine, but in reality it's not. I was anxious and constantly looking over my shoulder, worried he was going to do something final and there was this ongoing terror underneath.

My daughter was also having panic attacks regularly during the night, screaming "No Daddy No". She would wake screaming, "I can't breathe Mummy, there's something on my chest". When she was three she said to me that she didn't want to be alive anymore. She wouldn't go anywhere near him or let her pick him up.

The intervention order was in place by this point, but it was an interim order. So, then it was going through magistrate's court and it was going to trial. Steve was saying, "She's crazy, I don't know what she's talking about, she's made it all up." After many delays and my lawyer's intervention I finally got to magistrate's court. I was terrified because I was there by myself and the people that I expected to be there were also very frightened of him. He was so controlling and so physically threatening I worried that he would stab me or strangle me.

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#### **Bronwyn**

The door was shut and I couldn't see any way out. I didn't know what resources or services there were at that point. I was too bloody scared to do anything.

Sometimes he would go to the shops on his way home depending on how pissed he was and buy good food. But that was very occasionally. I was more worried about the kids being fed.

www.insightexchange.net/my-economic-safety/

#### **Jules**

Jed was sending me abusive texts for an average of 8 hours per day, every day for months. That, with his comments and social media posts, meant it got to the point where I had to tell the board and executives where I work. My employer had to lock down the lifts so no one could get up to my office. My colleagues escorted me to and from my car because I was terrified that he would be waiting for me out the front.

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#### Melinda

I was working full time. But I would dread every afternoon and evening when I would see Dan's shoes walking down from the stairs. That's when I knew it was on for young and old.

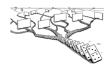
He would come in the door, slam the door, go downstairs, have a shower, and piss off for about two hours to his friend Anthony's house, I assumed. I had to get home to get the kids ready, bathed, homework done and fed and make sure the house was all tidy before Dan came back at 6pm.

When Dan got back, he would always carry on, "what's this shit for dinner". It was just nonstop.

\*\*

My hope has always been that you get some sort of insight across to those that have been fortunate enough to never have experienced violence of any sort. Violence is like a spider's web. There are other implications that are never thought of and can equally destroy a person's life. People need to know it is very complex, messy, and sticky.

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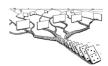
#### Belinda

The abuse got worse as I got older. Brett was all about control. It was his way or no way. Even when it came to buying something for the kids, what you cooked for dinner everything was control. He'd get cranky and take something out of the car so I couldn't drive the car. I "if you ever take me from my kids again, I will kill you".

I wasn't able to leave the house, shop or take kids to school without the car. He would do stuff like that. He was the controlling type.

\*\*

I don't even eat some nights because I don't have enough food to cook for everybody, so I feed all my kids first. My kids ask me, "why aren't you eating?" and I just say "I am alright, I've just got a tummy ache". It's just not fair that we have to live like scabs, like paupers and he still gets to live like a king.







Victim-survivors are often pathologised as 'anxious' and 'fearful' or socially heralded as 'fearless' but in reality have many *reasons* to fear.

The binary comparison of victim-survivors being either 'fearful' or 'fearless' is further replicated and reinforced through the reductive idea that victim-survivors are either 'vulnerable' or 'empowered'.



OR

FEARLESS

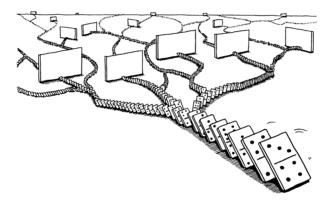
(Cempowereds)

These simplifications serve to locate the 'problem' of violence and abuse (or the 'solution' to it) within the victim-survivor as an individual. This reinforces victim-blaming and ignores the social and structural context in which violence and abuse is perpetrated, concealed, minimised and condoned.

Victim-survivors *reasons to be afraid* vary because experiences of and resistance to violence are unique and situational.



Many victims-survivors of domestic, family and sexualised violence report specific <u>reasons</u> to fear based on their expert knowledge and understanding of the perpetrator's threats, behaviours <u>and</u> the kinds of social responses anticipated from others. (Harper, 2022)



Some examples from published literature are included in the following pages.

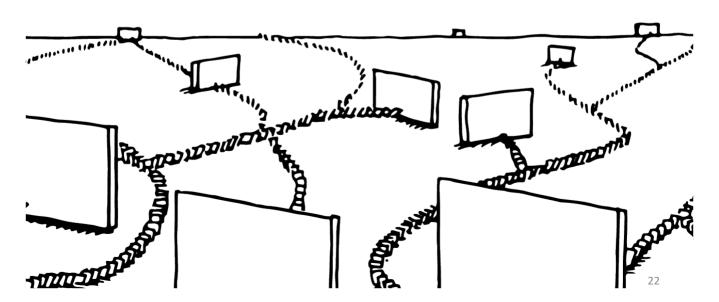
Many victims-survivors have reasons to fear perpetrators' ongoing and escalating use of violence against them, their children, other family members including violence against animals and damage to property in both the short and longer term.

Laing & Humphries, 2013; Shaqiri & Osmani, 2020

Victim-survivors often fear that the perpetrator will assault, humiliate, degrade, entrap, injure or kill them or a loved one.

Harper, 2022; Dziegielewski, Campbell & Turnage, 2005 Victims-survivors also report fearing possible assaults and abuse from perpetrators' friends and family members especially in the immediate aftermath of leaving a perpetrator and/or after formally reporting abuse.

Evans & Feder, 2016; Felson et al., 2005



Victims-survivors describe anticipating harmful responses from others, such as the fear of not being believed and of no action being taken against the perpetrator.

Victims-survivors also fear being blamed for the violence which may cause or exacerbate existing adversities such as the fear of experiencing housing injustices and homelessness. Victims-survivors fear of experiencing economic insecurity and significant financial loss.

Voce &Boxall, 2018; Shackel, 2009

Roschelle, 2008; Willse, 2016

Zufferey, Chung, Franzway, Wendt & Moulding, 2016

Victim-survivors fear losing work and career progression, the social stigma associated with being identified as a victim-survivor and the possible harm to their reputation and other negative social consequences.

Victims-survivors fear of receiving inadequate child support.

Victims-survivors fear of removal of children.



Harper, 2022; Voce &Boxall, 2018

Swanberg & Logan, 2005

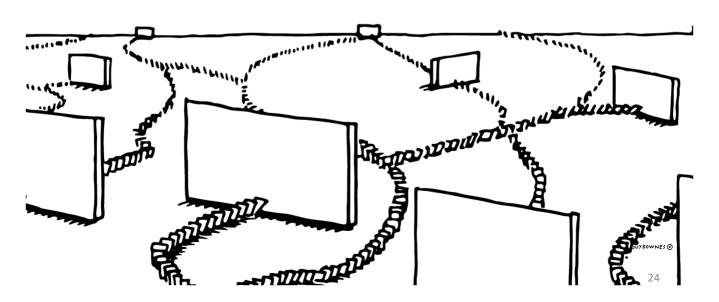
Patrick, Cook & McKenzie, 2008

Victims-survivors from socially, politically, and economically disenfranchised communities, often fear disclosing violence and abuse due to the potential for racist, classist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, ageist responses against them, their families and communities.

For example, Black Indigenous People of Colour who are victim-survivors often fear the use of racist Police harassment against their communities and reinforcement of racial stereotypes. Victims-survivors fear of being misidentified as the perpetrator.

Laing & Humphries, 2013

Storer, Rodriguez, & Franklin, 2021; Ghafournia & Easteal, 2021. Lewinson, Thomas & White, 2014



People who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (Gender Diverse), Intersex, Queer and Asexual+ (LGBTIQA+) often fear reporting domestic, family and sexualised violence anticipating that "police and service providers will minimise or fail to understand or take their concerns seriously" and that "reporting intimate partner violence will - lead to further stigmatisation of LGBTQ identities and relationships". LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors may also fear the perpetrator's threats to reveal their sexual or gender identity, HIV status and fear the perpetrator targeting/assaulting gendered body features as part of violence and abuse (p.7)

Carman, M., Fairchild, J., Parsons, M., Farrugia, C., Power, J., & Bourne, A (2020)

Victims-survivors fear of not being taken seriously by Police. Victims-survivors fear of being criminalised and incarcerated.

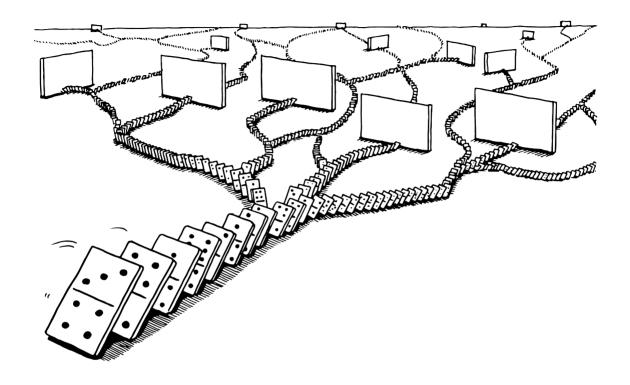
Victims-survivors fear of losing custody of children or who are ordered to live with or maintain contact with a perpetrator due to Court Orders.

Wydall, & Zerk, 2021

Birdsey & Snowball, 2013

Francia, L., Millear, P. & Sharman, R, 2020; Roberts, D., Chamberlain, P. & Delfabbro, P, 2015

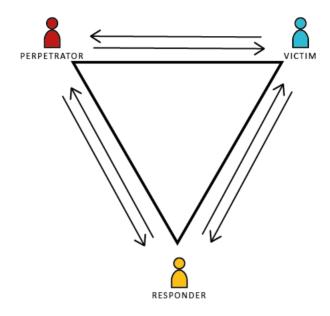




Victims-survivors have very many reasons to fear that are specific to their personal, social, cultural, economic, geographic and political realities. Yet responders often do not seek to understand victim-survivors' lived expertise concerning their reasons to fear and their strategies for resisting and surviving violence, abuse and injustices.

(Coates & Wade, 2007)

"A key to understanding interpersonal violence is to appreciate that it is social and interactional....All of these interactions take place in a broader context which includes natural, material, social, political, spiritual and cultural conditions."



View the short Insight Exchange animation (3mins)

Violence is social and interactional https://vimeo.com/591876130

Scan the static QR code to view the animation.





## Reflections about fear

Reasons to fear vary because experiences of and responses to violence and abuse are unique and situational.

The following de-identified reflections have been contributed by individuals with lived experience of domestic, family and sexualised violence and/or experience in responding (formally or informally). Some participants shared more than one response and each page presents a combination of voices.

#### Fear is used to control

"Violence is used to create fear, then the fear is used as a way of control."

"I would actually physically start shaking or stutter because I was trying to say something to him... and he would laugh about that, he would be like you know "what are you shaking at?" and then just start laughing, and then because he saw that side he knew that anything he did would just frighten me."

"I experienced fear within my body. Within my soul. I can't save my mum. I don't feel fear -I feel dread."

"If I disclose at work and the perpetrator discovers that I have told anyone."

## Fear may not be immediate

"I think fear is asked about in an emotional or cognitive concept. I think it is assumed of victims of violence and abuse have time and room to feel and fear everything. Sometimes we don't have that privilege."

#### Fear and time

"Fear morphed into other aspects of living. Like I feared 6pm the time when he would arrive home."

"I fear the pace. The pace that I can't keep up with the rage and volatility. I fear the pace that it won't be over quick enough."

"I fear the stillness of the aftermath. Where you are not sure if there are still burning embers amongst the rubble."

#### Fear I can't afford

"I can't afford to spend my energy on fear, I have to use my energy on staying in front of the violence. Staying in front of knowing what will be next, what my options are, and all that might mean for everything else in my life."

"I feel fear in my bones and in my muscles but don't give it time in my mind. I need my mind to be able to handle everything."

## Fear of being misunderstood

Victim-survivors are often misunderstood as 'paranoid' when they are fearful for a range of good reasons.

There can be a range of abuses going on that are not causing a person to be 'fearful' but are working to constrict their life.

#### Fear costs

"Fear claims the future."

"Fear of the impact of domestic violence on children. The effects of my own fear on the children, as well as the effects on my unborn child."

"I am now concerned about the long-term effects of that my constant fear had on my children."

"Fear can motivate protection, especially with protecting children."

#### Fear of inaccuracy

"Fear, trauma and memory: Fear that my recollective memory may not be an accurate account of the violence and abuse."

## Fear is not removed, extracted or erased

"From your position of professionalism, power, and authority - 'doing of justice' does not remove my fear."

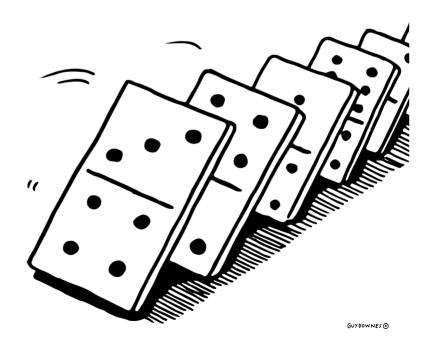
#### Fear concealed

"The environment in which I am required to talk about my experiences (in order to access/resources) limits how much I can say and how I say it.

How I describe my reasons to fear in front of my kids when expected to by services and responders is a difficult dilemma?"

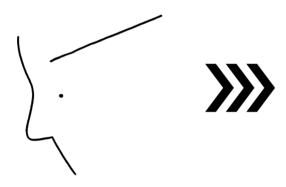
#### Fear seemingly diluted

"With each retelling, my reasons to fear (past and present) are not lost, diminished or any less concerning. Yet having to talk to many people, repeating the same information, or expected to answer questions with brevity, or answering questions in exposing spaces/places, all influence how much I need to conceal the intensity of fear I live in."

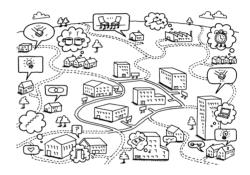


# 5 **Uplifting our responses** We need to move to asking questions that explore a victimsurvivor's lived/living experiences - what they are having to do (and not do) to create safety and uphold dignity.

Responding to threats or experiences of violence and abuse with fear is appropriate and proportionate – victim-survivors have reasons to fear.



Responding with fear is not a 'problem of the mind or perspective'. As responders we need to move from questions about the state of the victim-survivor's mind...

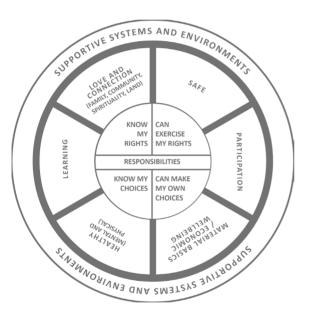


...to asking questions that explore a victim-survivor's lived/living experiences – what they are having to do (and not do) to create safety and uphold dignity.

#### We need to understand

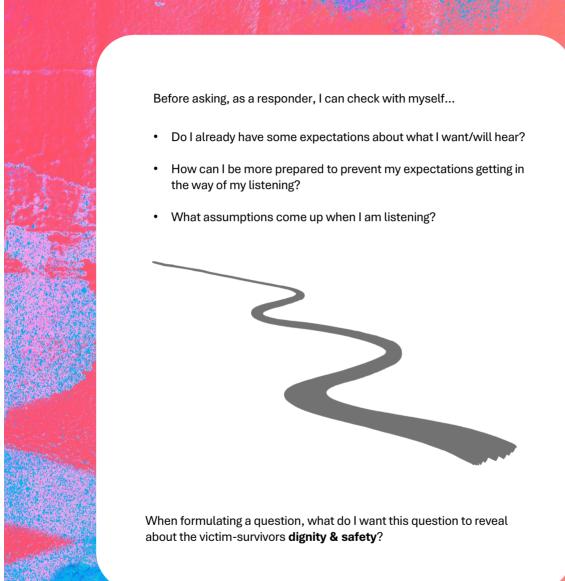
Victim survivors have reason to be 'afraid'.

A victims' 'fear' looks different across the domains of their life.



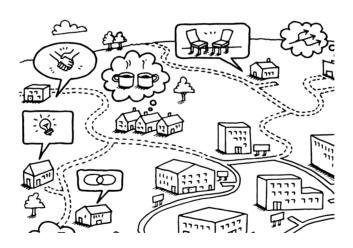
#### We need to explore:

- Victim-survivors reason/s to be afraid. This keeps the deliberate perpetration of violence and abuse (in any/many forms) in view.
- What lengths and efforts victim survivors are having to do to mitigate the violence, create or rebuild safety, protect children, pets, property, belongings, loved ones, the reputation and safety of the broader community, immediate and future opportunities, resources and more.
- What lengths and efforts victim survivors are going without to survive, or to conceal their suffering so that dignity, safety, and useful strategies are preserved.

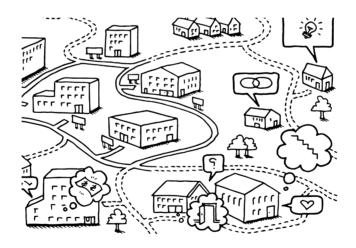


What made it safe enough or urgent enough to tell me today?

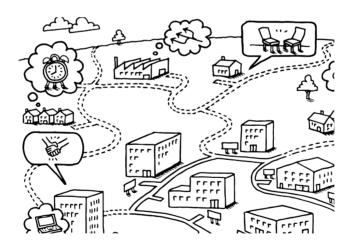
Your fear is a really important response. How do you know to be afraid?



What kinds of things are you having to do to stay safe and well?

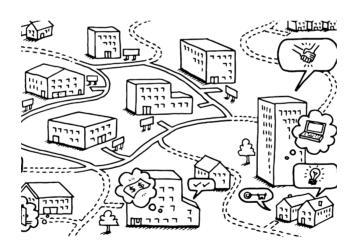


Are there things that are important to you (or your kids) that you have to give up? To go without?



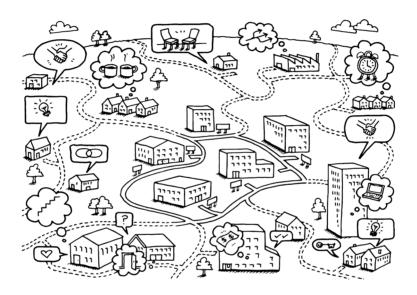
What kinds of things do you do to hide that fear? In public, from others, from your kids?

How do you know to do that?



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What you know, notice and do (and don't do) is our best way to understand.



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We want to be guided by you, and your <u>reasons</u> to be afraid so that we are useful to you (and your children) in supporting your safety and options.



## **INSIGHT EXCHANGE**

**Insight Exchange** centres on the expertise of people with lived experience of domestic and family violence and gives voice to these experiences. It is designed to inform and strengthen social, service and systemic responses to domestic and family violence.

Launched in Australia in November 2017, Insight Exchange was established and developed in collaboration with Dr Linda Coates and Dr Allan Wade from the Centre for Response-Based Practice, Canada.

Insight Exchange is governed by Domestic Violence Service Management, a registered Australian charity (ABN 26 165 400 635).

Insight Exchange is sustained by generous donations from individuals and a silent donor, for the benefit of many.

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This resource is for all people. Insight Exchange respects the diversity of all sexualities and gender identities including but not limited to; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual + identities as well as heterosexual and cisgender identities.

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### **Insight Exchange information and reflection resources**



TALK | Purpose of this resource

This reflection resource is designed to reveal and value the strategic considerations of victim-survivors when deciding if, when and how to tell someone about experiences of violence and abuse.

"The decision to tell someone about lived experience of violence and abuse can be ongoing, long sighted, spontaneous, accidental, a wanted or unwanted necessity, or a combination of these things, and more.

The decision to tell can be changed, yet having told can't be undone.

The so called 'lines of public and private' are blurred and shift. And the 'dominoes' of what is told privately can quickly and problematically become 'public'... to people or places outside of the victim-survivors' consent and control.

Understanding the thought and intent that victimsurvivors put into deciding to tell and listening deeply when we are entrusted with what is told, will shape the quality of our responses."

(Excerpt from Insight Exchange resource: TALK)

Scan the static QR code to open the Insight Exchange resource 'TALK'.

This resource includes experiences of and resistance and responses to violence and abuse.

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Follow My Lead
English with Australian support contacts



Follow My Lead Aotearoa
English with NZ support contacts



**Sigueme a Mí**Spanish with Mexico support contacts



My Safety Kit
English with Australian support contacts



**My Safety Kit Aoteaora**English with NZ support contacts



Mi Kit de Seguridad
Spanish with Mexico support contacts



My Dignity – My body is mine
English with Australian support contacts



**Guide to Selecting a Counsellor** English with Australian support contacts



Voices of Insight Collection Lived experience insights

Explore more about workplace responses here: www.insightexchange.net/workplace-responses/

#### **Acknowledgment**





Insight Exchange acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our work and services operate and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We extend this respect to all First Nations peoples across the country and the world. We acknowledge that sovereignty of this land was never ceded. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.



Insight Exchange & RBPAotearoa uphold Tino Rangatiratanga in partnership with Māori – the generations who have gone before, and the generations yet to come. We extend this respect to all Indigenous peoples. We acknowledge Sovereignty was never ceded.



Insight Exchange acknowledges the Indigenous Peoples in Mexico. We acknowledge the right of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico to selforganization and selfdetermination. We pay our respect to Indigenous ancestors, elders and communities and their collective ownership of the land. We honour all Indigenous Peoples in Mexico, and acknowledge all who have maintained their forms of community organization rooted in resistance against the pressures from the State.

#### **Our Thanks**

The content in this resource has been developed over time with international and local content experts and lived experience expertise. We also thank the individual donors who make this work possible, to participants contributing to publications referenced in this resource, and most significantly to the people who have shared their lived experience insights for the benefit of many.

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- Amrita
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