FREE!

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

FREEDOM FROM ABUSE

Cristina seems scared of her husband. I wonder what is going on...

It can be hard to know what to do about woman abuse.
We may think something is wrong, but not want to say
or do anything about it.
But we need to take action, women's safety is at stake.

With this in mind, participants and staff from
St. Stephen's Community House in Toronto have created
this Fotonovela. We wrote and acted out this story about
Maria's journey. In her LINC class, Maria learns about
woman abuse. This knowledge raises concern for her sister,
Cristina. With help from her friend, Olga, and her
Settlement Worker, Wendy, she helps Cristina get the
information and support she needs.

This is a fictional story – we made it up based on the
experiences of many people. We hope that you will
find it interesting, informative, and inspiring.

Main Cast

Maria

Newcomer to Canada, LINC student

Cristina

Maria's sister

Olga

Maria's friend and classmate

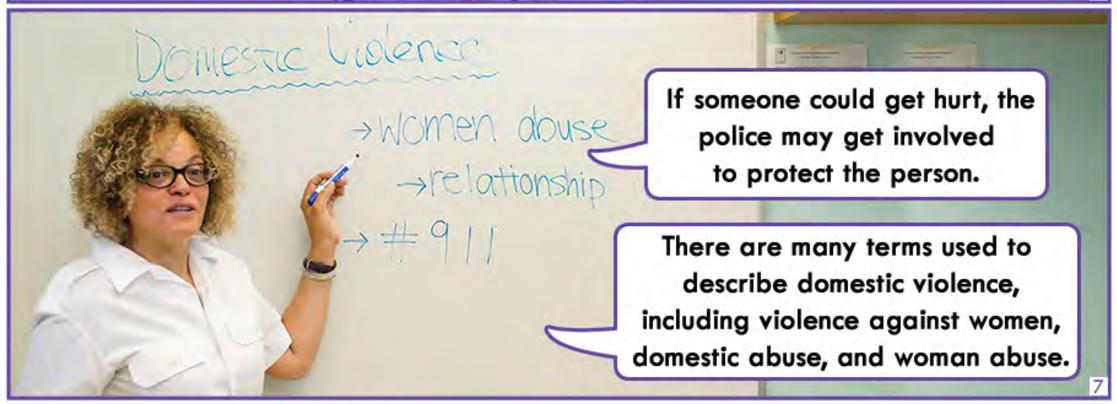
Wendy

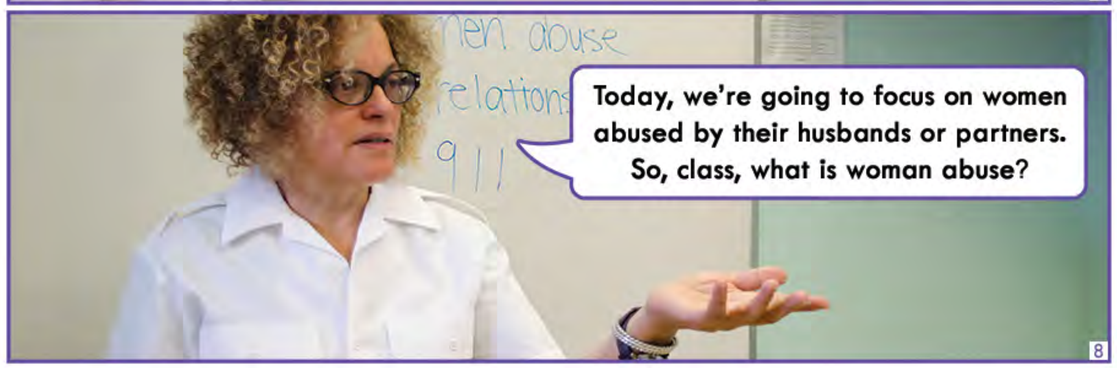
Maria's settlement worker

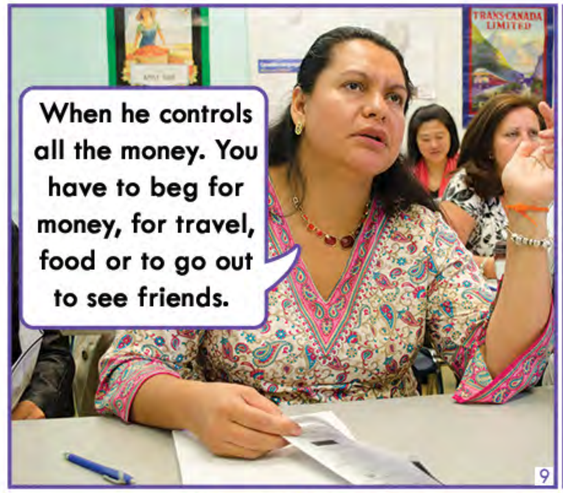
Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) is a province-wide
public education campaign run by the Centre for Research
and Education on Violence Against Women and Children,
with support from the Ontario Women's Directorate,
to raise awareness of the signs of woman abuse so that
those close to an at-risk woman or an abusive man can help.

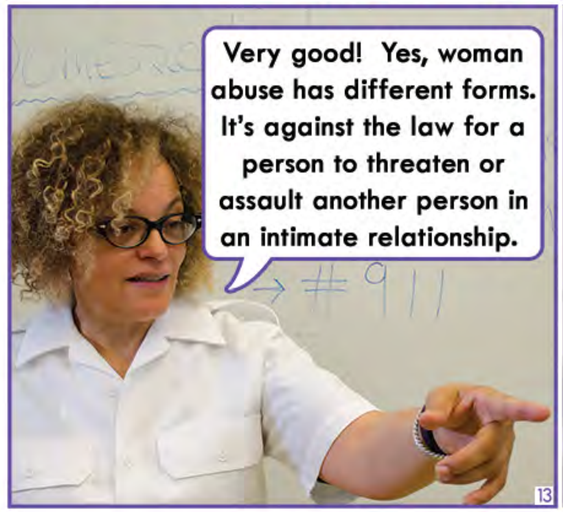
Maria and Olga are newcomers to Canada. They study at the same LINC class and have become good friends. They are concerned about what is happening in the world around them.

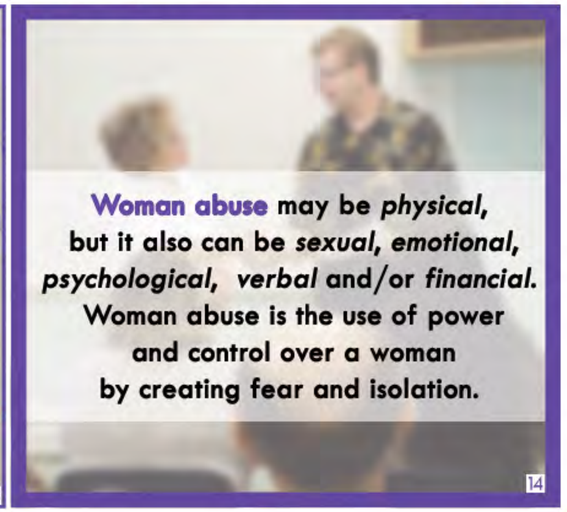
In the class, police officer Anita is invited to talk about woman abuse.











Cristina seems scared of her husband.
I wonder what's going on...
15

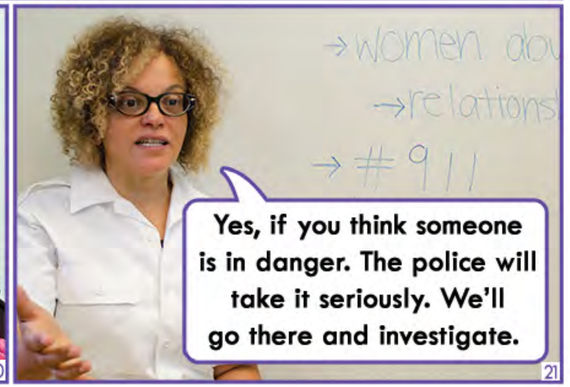
Does woman abuse only happen in some cultures?
16

No! Woman abuse can happen in all social, religious, racial, cultural, income and educational groups regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital or relationship status.
17

Even though anyone can be a victim of abuse, the majority of the victims are women.
• One in four women in Canada suffers some form of abuse by her partner
• Only 25% of domestic violence is reported
Source: Nova Vita Domestic Violence Prevention Services. Domestic Violence-Related Statistics
18

People who are abused or know of someone being abused should seek help.
If they are in danger, call 911.
19

Should I call 911 if I hear my neighbors fighting?
APPLY NOW
20


Yes, if you think someone is in danger. The police will take it seriously. We'll go there and investigate.
21

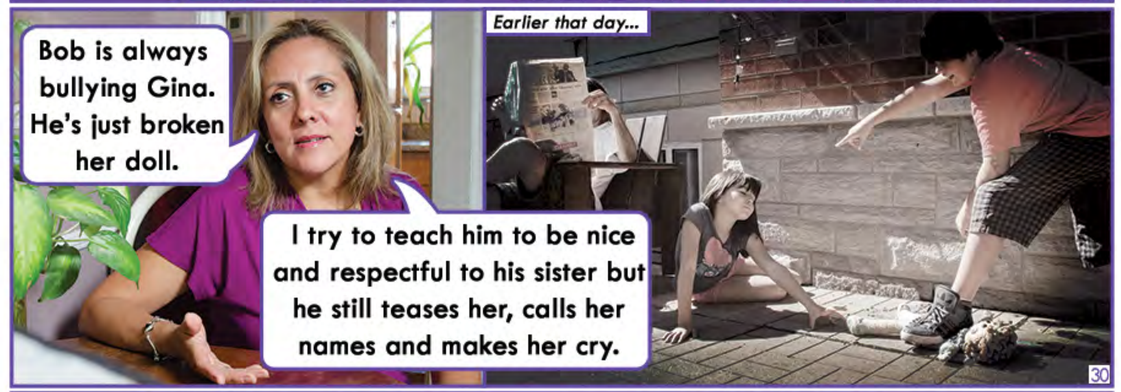
But it's a private matter, isn't it?
22

No, everyone has a responsibility. Abuse in relationships can lead to serious injury or even death.
23

The police service has a duty to work with communities to prevent and reduce woman abuse.
If you report abuse to the police, make sure you keep a record – get the police officer's badge number and write down what they say to you.
24

During lunch break, Olga notices that Maria looks pensive.

After Maria finishes classes, she goes to visit her sister Cristina, who lives with her husband Andy and two children, Gina and Bob. When she arrives, she sees that her niece, Gina, is crying in Cristina's arms.



Sometimes I feel I can't stand it anymore... but what can I do?
He has a job and supports the family.
We depend on him.
33

In today's class, we had a talk about woman abuse. What he does to you is abusive.
Here's some information from the police officer.
34

I can't leave him. I'm worried that I can't support the children if we separate I'll have no place to live and no money.
35

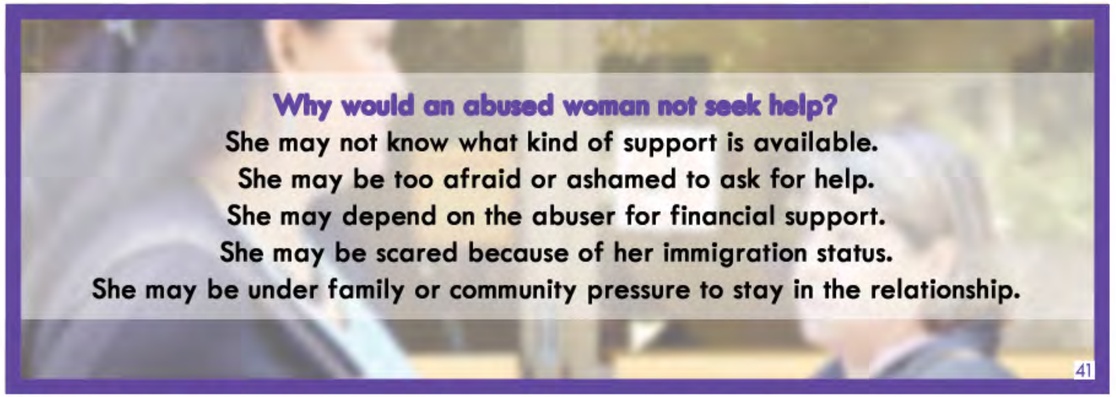
He's my sponsor to be in Canada. If we separate, I'm afraid that they may kick me out and send me back!
36

I understand. We need to find out more information and get help. Let me ask Wendy, our settlement worker, what we can do.
37

It's not easy for you to handle this. I'm your sister and I will always stand by you and the children.
Thank you. I know I can always count on you.
38

Next morning, before class, Olga meets Maria in front of the community centre.
Hi Maria. How's your sister?
39

It's very complicated. I'm going to talk to Wendy after class to see what I can do.
COMMUNITY HOUSE
40


Why would an abused woman not seek help?
She may not know what kind of support is available.
She may be too afraid or ashamed to ask for help.
She may depend on the abuser for financial support.
She may be scared because of her immigration status.
She may be under family or community pressure to stay in the relationship.
41

Great! Wendy helped me with something last year, she knows a lot about community resources. I'll come with you if you want.
ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY HOUSE
42

After class, Maria and Olga go to Wendy's office.

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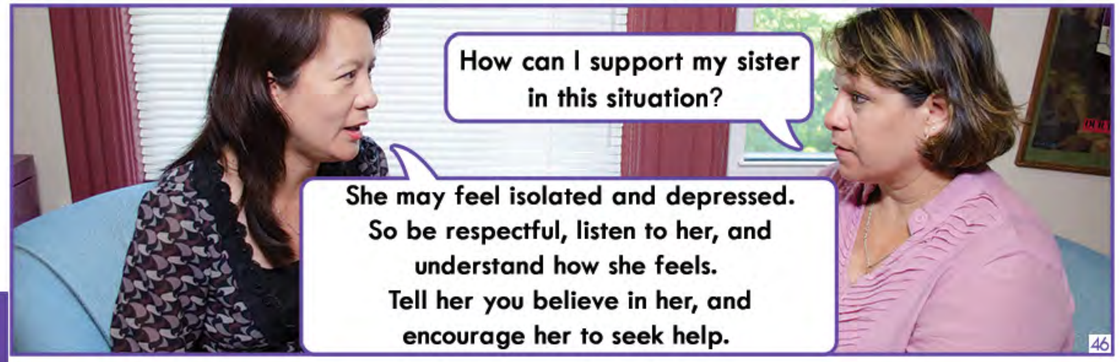

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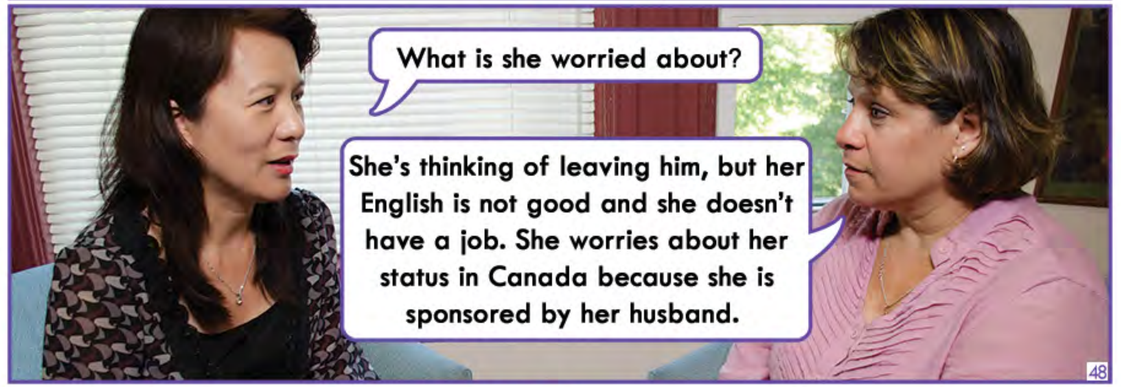

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There are many organizations in the community to provide services and support for abused women and their families. See *page 19* for information on community resources.

Assaulted Women's Helpline

1-866-863-0511

Free, 24 hours, 7 days a week, in more than 150 languages

Services: Crisis counseling, safety planning, emotional support, information and referrals.

50

A Safety Plan is important, for both women who remain in the home and women who leave. It helps women to:

1. Protect themselves while living with an abuser
2. Prepare to leave an abusive situation
3. Know where to go and what to do after leaving

For detailed information on a safety plan, please go to:
http://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca/safety-planning

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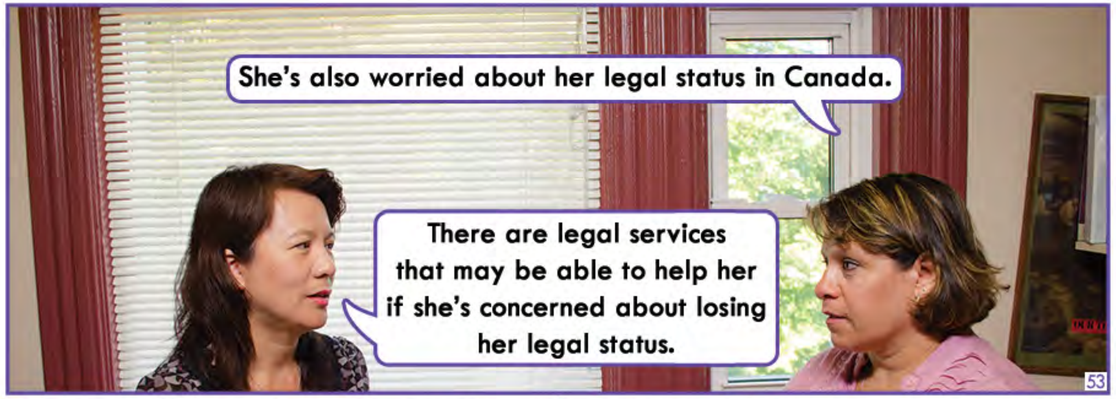

Warning Signs of Abuse

If you recognize some of these warning signs, it may be time to take action:

- He puts her down
- He does all the talking and dominates the conversation
- He tries to suggest he is the victim and acts depressed
- He tries to keep her away from you
- He acts as if he owns her
- He lies to make himself look good or exaggerates his good qualities
- He acts like he is superior and of more value than others in his home

- She may be apologetic and makes excuses for his behaviour or becomes aggressive and angry
- She is nervous about talking when he's there
- She seems to be sick more often and misses work
- She tries to cover her bruises
- She makes excuses at the last minute about why she can't meet you or she tries to avoid you on the street.
- She seems sad, lonely, withdrawn and is afraid
- She uses more drugs or alcohol to cope

Signs of High Risk

The danger may be greater if:

- He has access to her and her children
- He has access to weapons
- He has a history of abuse with her or others
- He has threatened to harm or kill her if she leaves him: He says "If I can't have you, no one will."
- He threatens to harm her children, her pets or her property
- He has threatened to kill himself
- He has hit her, choked her
- He is going through major life changes (e.g. job, separation, depression)
- He is convinced she is seeing someone else.
- He blames her for ruining his life
- He doesn't seek support
- He watches her actions, listens to her telephone conversations, sees her emails and follows her
- He has trouble keeping a job
- He takes drugs or drinks every day
- He has no respect for the law

Signs of High Risk

The danger may be greater if: (continued)

- She has just separated or is planning to leave
- She fears for her life and for her children's safety or she cannot see her risk
- She is in a custody battle, or has children from a previous relationship
- She is involved in another relationship
- She has unexplained injuries
- She has no access to a phone
- She faces other obstacles (e.g. she does not speak English, is not yet a legal resident of Canada, lives in a remote area)
- She has no friends or family

Risk of Death

The Domestic Violence Death Review Committee found that the most common reasons why domestic violence ended in death were:

- The victim was separated from the person who killed her, or she was getting ready to separate from him
- The couple had a history of domestic violence
- The level of violence had been increasing
- The abuser had shown signs of obsessive behaviour, including stalking the victim
- The person who killed their spouse was depressed
- In the past, the abuser had threatened to kill the victim

Source: Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF), Immigrant and Refugee Communities
http://www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca

Where can I get help for Woman Abuse?

You can get help in an emergency, in a crisis, or anytime that you experience abuse.

Call the police for emergency protection: Call 9-1-1 in Emergency
Go to a hospital or tell your doctor.
Call a telephone crisis line for assaulted women.
Contact a settlement agency.
Contact a community information centre.
Speak to a social worker or counsellor.
Go to a shelter.

Community Resources

Assaulted Women's Helpline : www.awhl.org Toll-free: 1-866-863-0511 Toronto: 416-863-0511 TTY: 1-866-863-7868	Crisis counselling and referrals to shelters, legal advice and other services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Interpretation services for more than 150 languages
Fem'aide : www.femaide.ca Toll-free: 1-877-336-2433 TTY: 1-866-860-7082	For Francophone women seeking support, referrals, and information on woman abuse.
Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres : www.sexualassaultsupport.ca	Network of 20 community-based rape crisis centres who provide counselling and referrals to people who have suffered sexual abuse.
Ontario Network of Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Treatment Centres : www.satcontario.com	These centres provide care to women, children, and men who have recently been sexually assaulted or experienced domestic violence.
Legal Aid Ontario : www.legalaid.on.ca Toll-free: 1-800-668-8258 Toronto: 416-979-1446	Legal assistance for low-income people
Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC) : www.metrac.org Toll-free: 1-877-558-5570 Toronto: 416-392-3135	Public legal information materials and workshops on issues concerning women and children experiencing violence.
211 Ontario : www.211ontario.ca Telephone: 211	24-hour telephone referral service for all types of social services; online resource to help you find community and social services available across Ontario.
Neighbours, Friends and Families (NFF) : www.immigrantandrefugeenff.ca	Information for immigrant and refugee women and families, as well as the service providers who help their communities.

Source: Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO); Settlement.Org

Credits

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