# Technology and Domestic Violence

You probably know that domestic and family violence is about power and control but how does this relate to technology?

Technology abuse enables the person using violence or abuse to have further control over their partner or former partner, with ongoing stalking, monitoring, intimidation, and isolation, all increasing the level of fear that already exists.

In this video, some examples of technology abuse will be provided with an explanation about how this type of abuse occurs, along with ways that you could become technology safe. Ideas for consideration will relate to someone in a relationship, someone who has left a relationship, and someone who has children and young people and wanting to assist them to establish and maintain technology safe practices.

The aim of the video is to consider what you can focus on for protection and potential prevention of technology abuse. The information provided in the video does not include recording and reporting abuse, extreme examples such as remote control of cars or medical devices, or the legalities that are involved with this type of abuse.

Throughout this video we will talk about other resources that may be useful. These resources are located on our website domesticviolence.com.au. The resources include check lists, a template for emails, and lists of other sources of information related to this video.

So, let’s begin with some examples of technology abuse. Please remember these are only a few examples and not a complete list. Please also remember that technology changes at a rapid rate and new ways to use technology to abuse will happen.

* Calls, texts, emails, or social media that are abusive, harassing, or threatening.
* Placing tracking devices on your phone to monitor your movements.
* Posting or threatening to post images without your consent. These images could be personal and very private to you.
* Identity theft, monitoring your location or use of services, or gathering your information to threaten, harass and abuse you.

Many other examples of the tactics used are covered in the technology abuse wheel. A copy of this wheel, in more detail, is available in The Purple Book which you can view or download from our website.

## How does technology abuse occur?

There are many ways it is enabled, for example through:

* Your devices that store information about you like your phone, camera, computer, fitness/smart watches; basically, anything connected to the internet, even voice activated lights and power points.
* Your apps and social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat, LinkedIn; or any system that you use to share information with others, and this includes location settings.
* Your subscriptions like emails, online calendars, online storage for photo sharing,   
  pay-tv, anything where you may have a shared or family account.
* Your information that may be stored with other parties like government providers, local services and any loyalty programs you join.

The information other parties hold about you can include your personal identifiable information like name, date of birth, address, email, phone, location, and even an image of you. It may also include meta data, that is, information stored like details about your activities, your purchases, and even activities relating to your children.

If you are in the relationship and want to consider ways to make using technology safer, think about these options that may be right and safe for you:

* Obtain a new phone to be stored somewhere safe and private to you.
* Access computers and the internet in a library or learning institute.
* Have someone you trust safely receive your emails and phone calls that are private to you.
* Remove the browser or call history or use private mode so there is no history of items you don’t want to be seen.
* Try not to delete everything, to avoid suspicion and accusations that may increase a risk to you.

If you are no longer in the relationship, this doesn’t mean you are safe from technology abuse. In fact, this type of abuse could increase as your ex-partner may want to know where you are and what you are doing.

The following are ways that could assist you becoming technology safe. Some may seem to extreme or even impossible to do, so please do not think you must do all or any of them. For some, the suggestions may be exactly what you feel is right at this time. Remember they are not necessarily a ‘long-term’ solution; however, they might be. It all depends on your unique situation.

You can become technology safe by:

* establishing a password on ALL your devices or change them if you already have them on your phone or laptop, social media accounts etc. Use passwords that are new, long, unique, and unpredictable.
* cleaning up your apps by deleting those apps you don’t need and keep only what is essential. Ensure you have privacy settings on, that you have not shared the app, and that you have updated the details with your safe phone number and email.
* adding extra security by using MultiFactor Authentication or MFA as this enables an added layer of security by sending you a text message with a number as well as your password. This is best established when you have a stable phone number to rely on.

Once you have done some of the things to increase your privacy and safety on technology, it is important to maintain them. Unfortunately, from time-to-time privacy settings in apps change and this may expose you and the privacy of your information to an increased risk. It is recommended that you take the time to regularly review your privacy setting and passwords. Some ways that you can keep on top or maintain safe technology behaviours include:

* Ensure you keep your privacy top of mind and don’t sign up to free giveaways or use a throw away email for these things.
* Keep an eye on your privacy settings, including geo-tagging on photos you take.
* Keep using a strong password and consider using a password manager.
* Don’t share your password with others, and if you think this has happened, change your password.
* Don’t reuse passwords for multiple accounts.

For more information, please see *Resource Two – Maintaining Technology Safe Behaviours* that includes the above ideas and more, available on our website.

Finally, a note on images and videos shared without your consent. Ideally, we don’t want any images or videos shared without your consent as this creates an opportunity for your partner or ex-partner to threaten and harass you. If this occurs, you can report it and request removal in some instances.

Now that you’ve considered and possibly taken some safe technology steps that are right for you, it’s time to check your children’s devices and information privacy.

It is pointless for you to have taken steps if your ex-partner is able to indirectly continue their technology abuse via the children. Unfortunately, your children’s devices and information are the next available way to enable technology abuse to continue.

Here are some ways that you may find helpful. Again, remember that some may seem too extreme or even impossible to do, so please do not think you must do all or any of them. For some, the suggestions may be exactly what you feel is needed at this time. Remember that they are not necessarily a ‘long-term’ solution, however they might be. It all depends on your unique situation.

* Be very careful when the children’s device is on as microphones can still be activated remotely.
* Have two phones. One could be cheap for use as an emergency phone for children to take to your ex-partner’s home. This is NOT a smart phone but is a phone without apps or location settings that the child can use for emergencies. The other phone can be your child’s smart phone which you control. This phone would need to stay with you.

For more information, please see *Resource Three – Checking your Children’s Devices and Information Privacy*, available on our website.

We use technology in so many ways it is hard to imagine life without it. We believe that to be safe, you should not have to forego the benefits of technology and that you have the right to be and feel safe.

We encourage you to implement some or all of the ideas we have spoken about in this video and to check out the resources we have mentioned throughout this video that are located on our website.

If you or someone you know needs help and lives in the Gold Coast or Beenleigh region, contact the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre on (07) 5532 9000 or visit domesticviolence.com.au.

For all other areas, call 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit 1800respect.org.au to chat online or find services in your area.

*Transcript from video: Technology and Domestic Violence   
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