



JWA SHABBAT PRESENTS

Myth vs Reality



READING/ARTICLE FOR JWA SHABBAT 2024

Today is Jewish Women's Aid Shabbat. It is a time where we have the opportunity to open conversations about a challenge faced in wider society, and also in our Jewish community: domestic abuse.

[Introduce yourself and connection with Jewish Women's Aid]

Even the term "domestic abuse" can make us flinch, avoid eye contact and feel awkward, but the cost of not naming it is high.

Silence allows misunderstanding of what domestic abuse is, who it happens to and how the Jewish community is affected. It allows abusive behaviour to persist and creates barriers for those affected to come forward for support. It stops friends and family members noticing signs and reaching out to their loved ones to check if they are ok. It prevents us from making the change we need to reduce and even eliminate violence against women and girls.

This year we have chosen a 'Myth vs Reality' theme, because despite the information overload we all experience daily, many core myths about domestic abuse continue to exist.

For example, many people assume that they would know if a close friend or family member was experiencing abuse. This is false. Abuse is often hidden, and signs can be subtle, like mood changes, withdrawal, or anxiety. Abusers may isolate, manipulate, or threaten victims to stay silent.

Another widely held belief is that domestic abuse only happens to certain kinds of people.

Again this is false. Domestic abuse can affect anyone, regardless of background. However, it disproportionately impacts women—1 in 4 will experience it— and Jewish women are not exempt. Abuse exists across all communities, and women seeking help come from diverse religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

Thankfully, as a community we have come a long way in raising awareness of domestic abuse, but there is still more work to be done in understanding the unique ways Jewish women can be affected. For example, through coercion around religious practice and community pressures. Women may also be afraid of being disbelieved and judged by their community, regardless of their observance or affiliation.

The Jewish Women's Aid team has collated these and other key myths surrounding domestic abuse, along with explanations, with more information available on the JWA website.

[Signpost to hardcopy leaflets if present].

Our aim is to open conversations and help to reduce the stigma associated with domestic abuse, so we encourage you to read and discuss this with your friends and family. In this way we can create a safer community in which abuse is not tolerated.