

Technology-Facilitated Abuse

Technology has come a long way, and this has led to a rapid increase in perpetrators of domestic/family violence using technology to perpetrate abuse, control, and violence.



WARNING: SOME OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS FACT SHEET MAY BE DIFFICULT TO READ. PLEASE TAKE YOUR TIME AND FIND ASSISTANCE IF YOU FEEL YOU NEED TO.

By using the internet, mobile devices, email, texting, social media and new surveillance devices, abusers have more tools and increased access to be able to harass, stalk and abuse their victims. This then results in victims of this abuse feeling like they cannot escape their abusers and as though technology has shackled them to their abusive partners/ex-partners.

Because victims are constantly harassed and/or monitored by their abusers, technology-facilitated abuse – like all other forms of abuse – can leave you feeling fearful for your safety and powerless. This form of abuse can also make ending the relationship harder because the abuser has limited your ability to talk with people or support services that could help you. Your abusive partner could also use technology after you have left the relationship to monitor, harass, and abuse you and/or to track your location. Some of the examples of technology-facilitated abuse, include:

- Sending texts, emails or messages via social media that are abusive, threatening and/or demeaning.
- Constantly making controlling and/or threatening phone calls to you.
- Making you prove where you are by making you send photos to show them your location.
- Checking your messages, internet activity and/or social media activity to monitor what you have been doing and who you have been talking to.
- Not allowing you to have a phone in the first place, and if you are allowed a phone, your abusive partner might only allow you to contact certain people.
- Using surveillance devices (such as spyware or a tracking system) to monitor, stalk and/or spy on you.
- Sharing sexual images or videos of you without your consent (this is also known as revenge porn and ‘image-based sexual abuse.’)

TECHNOLOGY ABUSE - POWER + CONTROL

Economic abuse

Tracking & accessing bank accounts or financial records online. Using identity theft to apply for loans or credit cards. Controlling or denying access to online bank accounts. Online activities that damage your credit rating.

Intimidating, monitoring & stalking

Changing passwords to accounts without consent or knowledge. Constantly contacting you via text or social media. Using tracking or monitoring devices to see where you're going. Using recording devices to check on your conversations. Using fake accounts to monitor you.

Isolation

Refusing you access to your technology. Closing your accounts. Replying to your messages in order to end your relationships with others. Infecting your computer with viruses to prevent you from using it.

Using others

Getting other people to post abusive or threatening messages to you on social media. Giving out your phone number or account details without your consent or knowledge.

Coercion & threats

Using emails, texts and social media to make threats. Posting false information on websites and blogs. Threatening to share messages or images on social media. Threatening to break your phone.

Minimising, denying or blaming

Telling you that the restrictions are for your own safety. Making you believe that you are responsible for installing spyware or infecting your computer with viruses.

Emotional abuse

Putting you down or embarrassing you on technology. Misusing technology to make you uncomfortable or confused ie, changing settings remotely, deleting items.

Using privilege & oppression

Making all the decisions about technology. Undermining your confidence about using technology. Locking you out of devices by changing the passwords. Determining how and when you use technology.

Your mobile phone is an important device for ensuring your safety, and as such we would recommend that you keep it always charged. Smartphones that have an internet connection capability are the most vulnerable for technology-facilitated abuse. It is easy to install spyware software onto a smartphone, and spyware software can also be used to turn your phone into a microphone which would mean that your abuser can hear everything you are saying – even if it has been switched off.

If you are worried that your abuser has installed spyware onto your phone, you can take it to your service provider (such as a Telstra shop) and they will be able to have a look for you. If you cannot do this, or cannot do this yet, and you are worried your abuser is listening in on you, you should remove the battery (if possible – some phones have removed this feature) from your phone or leave it somewhere else whilst you have the conversation. Alternatively, you can buy a cheap old-fashioned phone that does not have internet capabilities to allow you to make and receive calls and ensure that your abuser has not 'hacked' your phone and is unable to track you.

If you think your abuser is monitoring your technology usage, do NOT change your phone or computer habits suddenly as this can be extremely dangerous, for instance, do not suddenly clear your browser history. Instead, you can use 'incognito'

mode on your computer by pressing 'CTRL SHIFT N' at the same time on your computer to browse sites that you do not want your abuser knowing about – such as searching for help with domestic/family violence. Other safety tips include:

- Do not give your pin or password to anyone and lock your smartphone when you are not using it – if possible, however some abusers will not allow you to keep this secret
- Turn off the location settings (GPS) on both your phone and your social media accounts and applications
- When you are not using it, turn your Bluetooth off
- Try not to buy a used or 'jail broken' phone because these are easier to 'hack' and may be more vulnerable to spyware
- Talk to trusted friends and/or family members and ask them to keep their phones on them in case you need them for an emergency. It can also be a good idea to come up with a 'safe word' that lets them know that you need to get out now
- Memorise the phone numbers for domestic/family violence support services – it is important to remember the numbers because in a violent struggle, phones are easily broken, and phone numbers are easily lost.

Further Information

Yemaya Women's Support Service

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Please note that all information contained within this fact sheet is to be used as a guide only. If you require further information or assistance please contact Yemaya Women's Support Service.