



Lateral violence



More harm can be caused through lateral violence which affects individuals, families and communities. It's important to know that trauma caused through lateral violence increases disadvantage.

It is often described as the organised, harmful behaviours that we do to each other collectively as part of an oppressed group:

- Within our families
- Within our organisations
- Within our communities

When we are consistently oppressed, we live with great fear and great anger and we often turn on those who are closest to us.

Harmful behaviours and painful feelings include:

- Gossiping
- Jealousy
- Bullying
- Shaming
- Social exclusion
- Family feuding
- Organisational conflict
- Physical violence

If we don't work to address the trauma created by lateral violence, it will continue to pass on to the next generation, making it hard to break cycles such as sexual violence.

Like all forms of violence, lateral violence can become normalised if it is not challenged.

Addressing lateral violence

Lateral violence is not unique to Aboriginal people. What makes lateral violence different for Aboriginal people is where it starts. Often this is from:

- Working within a society that is not designed for Aboriginal ways of doing things
- The sense of powerlessness from oppressive behaviour created by colonisation
- The negative stereotypes that become internalised opinions, reinforcing feelings of powerlessness



The first step to tackling lateral violence is naming it and exposing the ways it impacts our communities. This includes:

- Addressing and eliminating bullying behaviour by making time for the group to agree on rules of behaviour and making sure to take a moment to respectfully remind the group if rules of behaviour are not being followed. Always follow-up with the people involved afterwards to check that they are okay.
- Having healthier ways of dealing with conflict. For example, always use curiosity to seek understanding, listen to hear instead of listening to respond, always acknowledge what the person is saying to you and always be responsible for yourself.
- Using healing approaches to increase social and emotional wellbeing. For example, incorporate art, song, storytelling and dance in everything you do, make sure everyone is greeted and taken care of by offering them something to drink, explaining the layout of the place and introducing them to people when they arrive.

*Within the Department of Health WA, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander colleagues and community.

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

Metropolitan area: A free 24-hr emergency service providing medical and counselling services for people who have experienced a recent (within 14 days) sexual assault, and counselling services for any form of unwanted sexual contact that has happened in the past for all genders ages 13 years and above.

Regional area: Advice and education and training can be provided to services across the state of Western Australia.

Call SARC on (08) 6458 1828 or Freecall 1800 199 888.

Email SARC Education and Training on SARCTraining@health.wa.gov.au

Yorgum Healing Services

Disability counselling, intensive family support and National Redress services

Call 1800 469 371

13 Yarn

The first national crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping, 24hrs/7 days a week

Call 139 276 (13YARN)

WA Police

To report a sexual assault:

Go to your local **police station**.

Call **131 444**

Go online [Safe2Say.com.au](https://www.safe2say.com.au)

Non emergencies

Police assistance and reporting

Call 131 444

Emergency

Call 000

Police, Fire, Ambulance