

Reproductive Coercion

(Reproductive Abuse)

This is a joint project between Women's Legal Service Tasmania and Women's Health Tasmania.

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What is reproductive coercion?

Reproductive coercion (also known as reproductive abuse) is behaviour that restricts a person's choices about their reproductive health. The behaviours are a way of controlling someone by limiting their choices about if and when they become pregnant, or if they have a termination.

Reproductive coercion is a deliberate abuse of power.

What can reproductive coercion look like?

Your partner may use physical violence, psychological, emotional, sexual, or economic violence, or other strategies to control your choices around your reproductive health.

What are some examples?

- Damaging a condom or removing it during sex
- Refusing to use a condom
- Preventing you from being able to afford contraception by controlling your money
- Hiding or disposing of oral contraceptives
- Pressuring you into pregnancy
- Forcing you to continue a pregnancy
- Forcing you to terminate a pregnancy
- Forcing or coercing you to be sterilised
- Stopping your access to reproductive health care
- Emotional manipulation or blackmail to control your choices about your reproductive health
- Threats to leave the relationship if you do not terminate the pregnancy

Is it illegal?

The *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) includes *coercion* in the definition of family violence.

Reproductive coercion is a form of control and increasingly recognised as an aspect of family violence.

If you are experiencing reproductive coercion, you have the option of applying for a family violence order. For more information, see our fact sheet ***Family Violence and Family Violence Orders*** and contact us on **1800 682 468**.

Case Study

Nina and George met a year ago. George told Nina that he did not want to wear a condom when they had sex because it felt better that way.

George knew that Nina was not taking any birth control for medical reasons, and Nina kept having to remind George to wear a condom when they had sex. George would reluctantly agree. Nina didn't realise it at the time, but George would often take the condom off part way through sex, without her consent.

Nina found out that she was pregnant. She was concerned that they hadn't known each other long enough to have a baby together. But George seemed happy about it, and despite Nina's reluctance, he convinced her to "give it a go" and go ahead with the pregnancy.

Towards the end of Nina's pregnancy, George's attitude started to change. He convinced Nina to leave her job, stay home and not visit friends. He asked Nina to give control of her bank account over to him, so he could "help manage her spending." He justified these demands as being "good for the baby." As Nina was heavily pregnant, she didn't have the energy to fight about it and agreed to comply.

Things got worse after the baby was born, but Nina was now living in George's house, relied on him for financial support, and was struggling with a newborn. It felt impossible to leave.

Contacts

Additional help is available by contacting the following organisations:

- Women's Legal Service Tasmania, on **1800 682 468**.
- Women's Health Tasmania through their Women's Health Information Line on **1800 675 028**.
- Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS), on **1800 697 877**.
- Family Violence Counselling and Support Service, on **1800 608 122**.
- 1800Respect, on **1800 737 732**.

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August 2021