

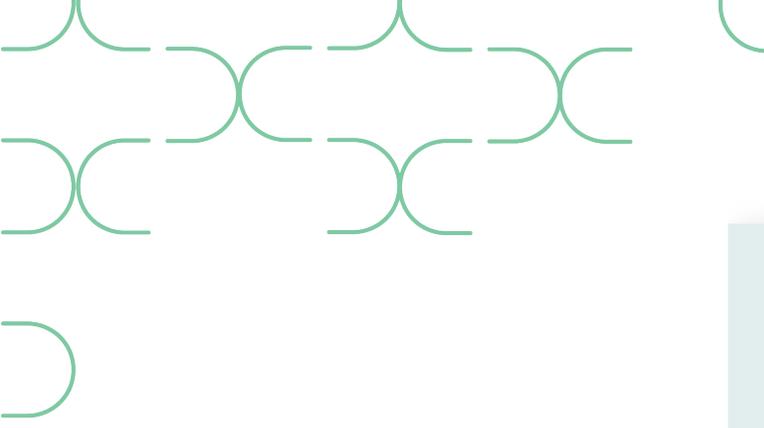


FEDERAL CIRCUIT AND FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA

# Understanding and Presenting Evidence of Coercive Control

Judge Hughes





37

*female victims of  
intimate partner homicide between  
1 January and 31 December 2024*

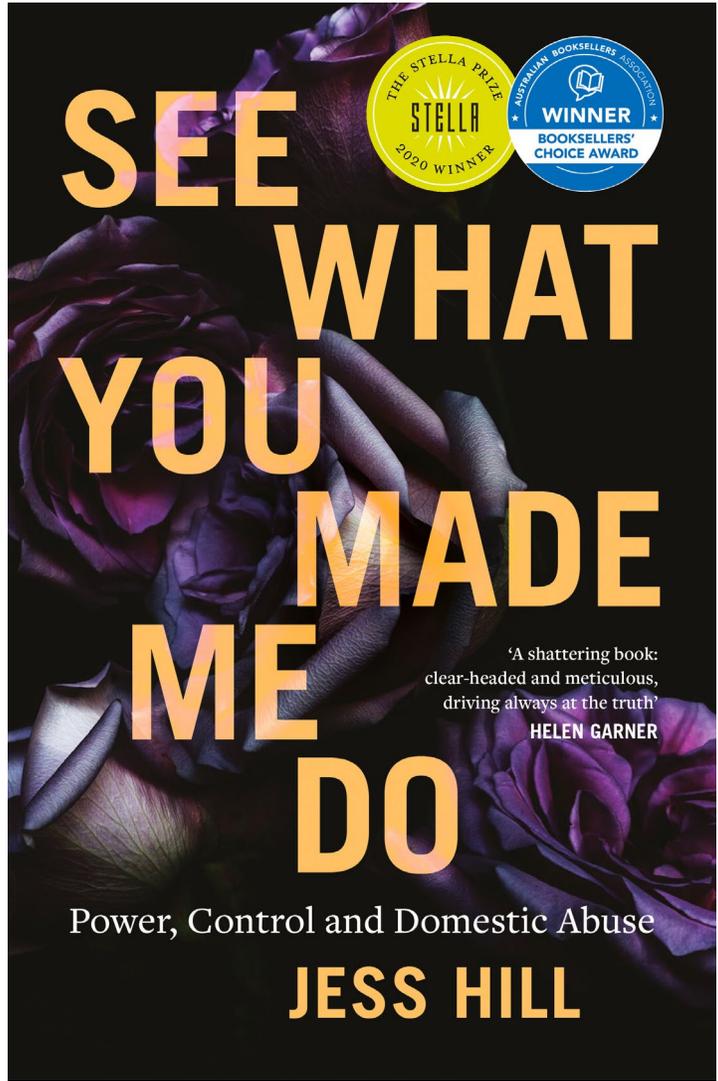
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*46 victims between  
1 January and 31 December 2023*

Australian Institute Criminology

National Homicide Monitoring Program - Intimate Partner Homicide Dashboard 2024.





**SEE  
WHAT  
YOU  
MADE  
ME  
DO**



'A shattering book:  
clear-headed and meticulous,  
driving always at the truth'  
HELEN GARNER

Power, Control and Domestic Abuse  
**JESS HILL**

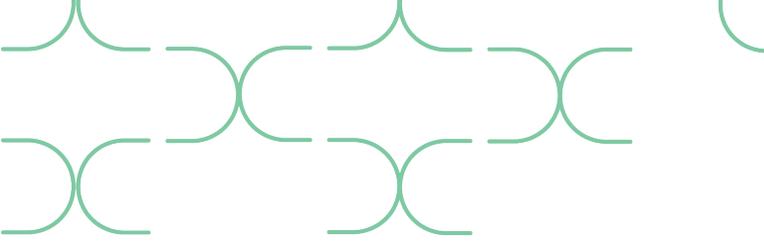


# Three Key Elements of Coercive Control:

- Dependency
- Debility
- Dread

Albert Biderman, 1957.



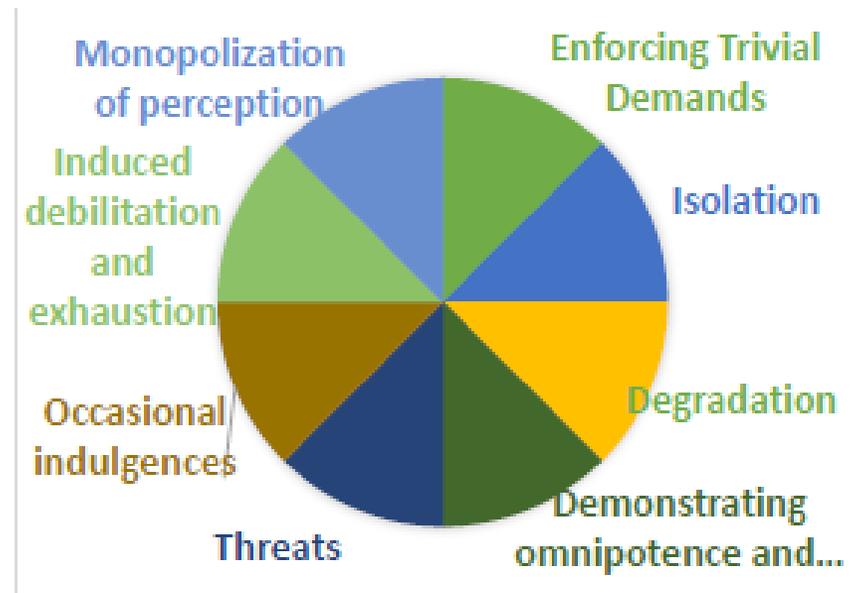


# Biderman Chart of Coercive Control:

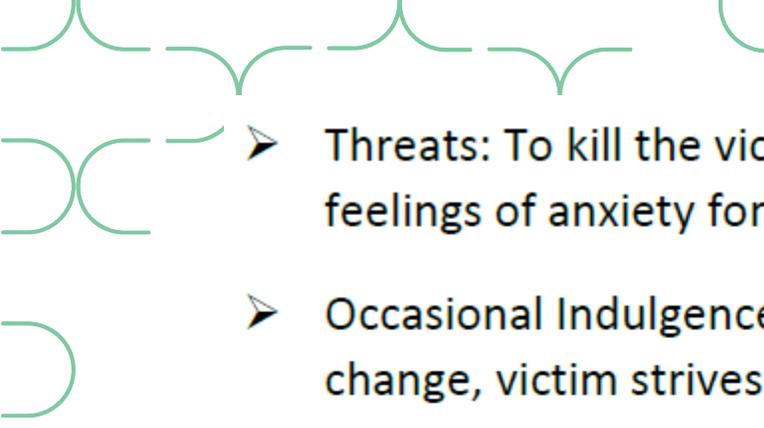
- Isolation
  - Monopolisation of perception
  - Induced debilitation and exhaustion
  - Threats
  - Demonstrating omnipotence
  - Occasional indulgences
  - Degradation
  - Enforcing trivial demands
- 

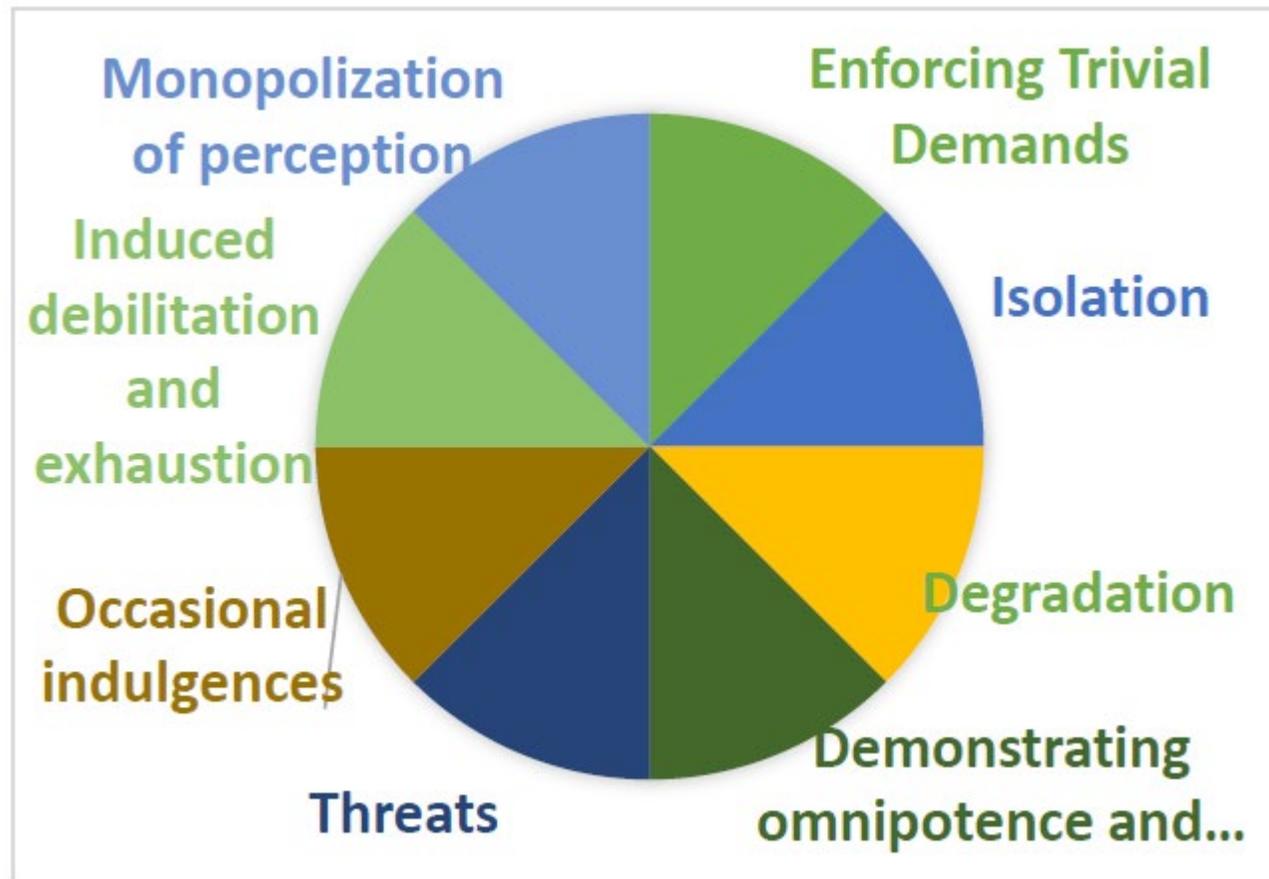
<b>Method</b>	<b>Effect and Purpose</b>	<b>Variants</b>
<b>Isolation</b>	<p>Deprives victim of all social support of their ability to resist.</p> <p>Develops an intense concern with self (this could be home environment)</p> <p>Makes victim dependent.</p>	<p>Complete solitary confinement</p> <p>Complete or partial isolation</p> <p>Group Isolation</p>
<b>Monopolisation of Perception</b>	<p>Fixes attention upon immediate predicament.</p> <p>Eliminates information not in compliance with demands.</p> <p>Punishes independence and /or resistance.</p>	<p>Physical isolation</p> <p>Darkness or Bright light</p> <p>Restricted movement</p> <p>Monotonous Food</p>
<b>Humiliation and Degradation</b>	<p>Makes resistance more 'costly' than compliance.</p> <p>'Animal Level' concerns.</p>	<p>Personal hygiene prevented</p> <p>Demeaning Punishments</p> <p>Insults and taunts</p> <p>Denial of Privacy</p>

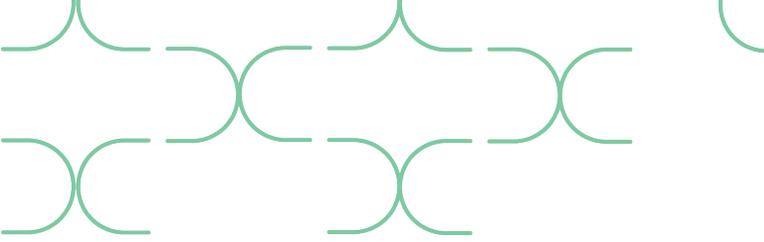
<b>Exhaustion</b>	Weakens mental and physical ability to resist.	Semi-Starvation Sleep deprivation Prolonged interrogation Overexertion
<b>Threats</b>	Creates anxiety and despair Outlines cost of non-compliance	Threats to kill Threats of abandonment/non-return Threats against family Vague Threats Mysterious changes of treatment.
<b>Occasional indulgences</b>	Positive motivation for compliance. Hinders adjustment to deprivation	Occasional favours Rewards for partial compliance Promises
<b>Demonstrating Omnipotence</b>	Suggests futility of resistance	Confrontation Showing complete control over victims face
<b>Forcing trivial demands</b>	Develops habit of compliance	Enforcement of 'rules'



- **Isolation:** Perpetrator deprives victim of all social support, they make the victim dependant on them, victim is discredited, perpetrator takes control e.g. of phone, finances, transport, victim is confined to the home
- **Monopolisation of Perception:** Perpetrator abolishes information that does not coincide with their views, they punish any actions that show resistance or independence, victim blaming, victims starts to feel they are at fault, constant monitoring/ calling, perpetrator behaviour is unpredictable i.e. charmer then abuser
- **Induced Debilitation & Exhaustion:** Sleep deprivation, perpetrator weakens victims ability to resist, perpetrator prevents access to essential items e.g. food, medicine is withheld, constant questioning of the victim

- 
- Threats: To kill the victim/ self/ family pets, to take the children, to leave the victim, results in feelings of anxiety for the victim
  - Occasional Indulgences: Perpetrator issues rewards for conforming behaviour, they promise to change, victim strives to receive these indulgences
  - Omnipotence: Perpetrator has complete control, physical assaults occur, stalking and harassment, use of 'male privilege' e.g. treating the victim like a servant, making all the big decisions, defining roles
  - Degradation: Perpetrator puts the victim down, victim experiences verbal abuse and is shamed in public, victims self-esteem is destroyed, punishments are issued, victim is prevented from engaging in personal hygiene tasks
  - Enforcing Trivial Demands: Perpetrator carries out mind games, victim is fully compliant and punished for non-compliance, rules are inflexible and unrealistic but often change and contradict making it difficult for the victim to 'comply'

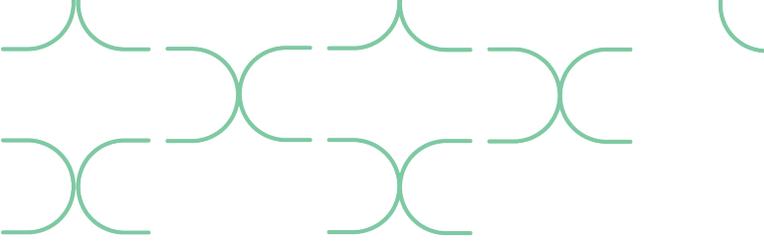




“Earlier on the night of the assault, my daughter told me she felt frightened all the time so, I accompanied her to the police station where she told the officer there that she was frightened to go home. He asked her what her husband had done and when she said ‘well, nothing but I’m frightened’, he said ‘well if he hasn’t done anything, I can’t do anything’. So she went home and was assaulted.”

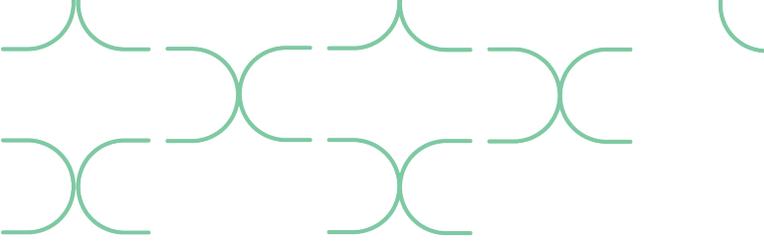
Submission 8, Inquiry into Family Violence Orders, Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, February 2025.





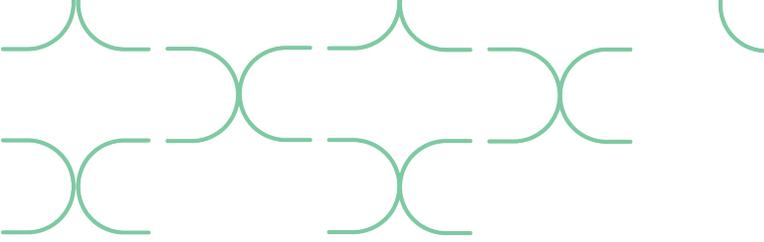
## Questions to elicit evidence of coercive control:

- Has your partner ever caused you to feel afraid?
  - Has your partner ever caused you to feel disrespected or humiliated?
  - Has your partner ever interfered with or controlled your relationship with your children?
  - Has your partner ever interfered with or controlled your activities?
  - Has your partner ever caused you to believe you were being stalked or monitored?
- 



## Questions to elicit evidence of coercive control:

- Has your partner ever threatened to harm himself/ you/ the children/ anyone else/ a pet?
  - Has your partner ever choked or strangled you?
  - Has he behaved in a sexually abusive way towards you or the children?
  - Has he ever been physically violent to you or the children or anyone else?
  - Have you ever had to take steps to protect yourself or your children from your partner?
- 



## Further questions:

- Involvement in the criminal justice or child protection systems
  - Mental illness
  - Substance abuse
  - Access to weapons
- 



# National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book



Entry Page Design by Nadine Davidson-Wall



E-COURSE

## Safe & Together™: An Introduction to the Model

The Safe and Together™ Model is an internationally recognized suite of tools and interventions designed to help child- and family-serving systems become domestic violence-informed. Continuously refined based on years of experience implementing the Model across the United States and other countries, the Model helps improve competencies and cross-system collaboration related to the intersection of domestic violence and child maltreatment.

This child-centered Model derives its name from the concept that children are best served when we can work toward keeping them safe and together with the non-offending parent (the adult domestic violence survivor). The Model provides a framework for partnering with domestic violence survivors and intervening with domestic violence perpetrators in order to enhance the safety and well-being of children.

Enroll \$75



*Average completion time: 2 hours and 40 minutes*

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# National Risk Assessment Principles for domestic and family violence

CHERIE TOIVONEN AND CORINA BACKHOUSE

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety,  
for the Commonwealth Department of Social Services

ANROWS





Phoenix  
AUSTRALIA

# Trauma-informed Practice

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