

Vignette 1: Meet Emily

Emily:

- is a 23 year old, non-Indigenous female living in regional NSW, with two sons, aged one year and two years old.
- grew up with both parents, and a younger sister. She identifies that her parents showed very little emotional warmth and love to her throughout her childhood and that her father was emotionally abusive towards both her mother and herself.
- states she struggled with substance use throughout her teens, as well as ongoing depression, self-harm, and one significant suicide attempt when she was 16.
- had her children removed by child protection approximately 9 months ago, when they were 3 months and 15 months old.
- lives with her maternal grandmother and is her registered carer.
- separated from her partner, Peter following the children's removal.

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- She has very few friends, and the recent COVID lockdown further socially isolated her.
- The children's removal occurred in the context of problematic alcohol use, by both Emily and Peter, as well as concerns regarding Emily's mental health and the impact of her ongoing depression on her ability to parent and meet her children's needs.
- The children have been placed with their paternal Grandmother, and Emily and Peter have supervised visits together for two hours weekly. The visits are supervised by Peter's mother.
- Emily attends counselling with a psychologist. She is engaged with a Women's Health Centre and attends several parenting groups. She attends fortnightly counselling with a drug and alcohol counsellor. She recently started attending a support group for survivors of domestic violence.
- Her engagement with services is sporadic. She often misses or cancels appointments. When Emily does attend services, Peter drives her and waits for her in the car outside.



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- Emily has disclosed that Peter perpetrated extensive emotional, physical, financial, and sexual abuse during her relationship and this abuse has continued post-separation.
- Emily states Peter is constantly with her and will not leave her alone. He has access to her bank account and is financially abusing her, constantly coerces her into having sex by stating that if she doesn't he will make sure that she never sees their sons again.
- Peter often visits his mother and spends extra time with the children, without the knowledge or approval of Child Protections. During supervised visits, the children will often seek him out when needing comfort. Peter then informs Emily that this is because they love him more and have no desire to spend time with her.
- Peter has a diagnosis of Bipolar and continues to use alcohol and cannabis daily.
- Emily has ceased alcohol use. She feels like her situation is becoming more and more hopeless.



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Vignette 2: Meet Ruth

- Ruth is 28-year-old woman, living in Melbourne's outer Northern suburbs.
- Ari is Ruth's partner. He is 34-years-old and lives with Ruth.
- Ruth and Ari are parents to 11-month-old Henry.
- Ruth has long found Ari controlling and quick to anger. Ruth noticed that things got worse after the first COVID lock down in Melbourne. Ari lost his job when things first shut down and has only been casually employed since.
- Ari wants to know where Ruth is all the time; he controls the money in the house and doesn't like Ruth to see her friends.
 - When Ruth and Ari argue or when Ruth expresses a problem with Ari's behaviour, he frequently tells her she is crazy and that no one will believe her.
 - Sometime during Ruth's pregnancy with Henry, Ari pushed her during a fight. At that time, Ruth left to go and stay with her parents who expressed concern and support.



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Vignette 2: Meet Ruth

- Since then, Ari has used physical violence a few times.
- Recently, Ruth told Ari that she is planning to separate from him.
- Since then, Ari has been trying to convince Ruth to stay. He has been threatening and has used physical violence, including grabbing and pushing her.
- Last weekend, Ari locked Ruth in their apartment, and smashed her phone and iPad to cut off her communication with family and friends. He threatened to kill himself if Ruth left and had killed their pet budgie 'to show her that he's serious'.
- Ruth does not believe Ari will seriously harm her, but she is worried that he is at risk of hurting himself.
 - She convinced Ari to meet with the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Team and told the clinician that she feels she cannot leave Ari now that he is so distressed. She is reluctant to report this matter to police or talk to a specialist family violence service, saying that she feels a deep sense of responsibility for Ari.



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Discussion Prompts

1. What are the risk factors for members of this family, collectively and individually? How often are these risk factors overlooked, dismissed or misunderstood? What does that mean for you in your role?
2. What are the current protective factors noted in the vignette? What opportunities are there to optimize these protective factors and by whom?
3. Which practitioners and/or services are best placed to mitigate the negative impact of the risk factors and maximise the protective factors?
4. What are the hurdles and opportunities for these services to work together? How could collaboration reduce the risk that family violence presents to this family?



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