

# Talking to Survivors

Someone who's been strangled has experienced trauma. Be patient, take time, and be prepared to repeat yourself and explain things more than once. Ask:

1. Are you having, or did you have, difficulty breathing?
2. Do you have a cough or changes in your voice?
3. Did you lose consciousness, or nearly lose consciousness?
4. Did you lose control of your bowels or bladder?
5. Did you think you were going to die?

If the survivor answers "yes", suggest they see a doctor, even if they say they feel fine, and especially if symptoms increase or change. You can also ask:

- What the abuser used to strangle or choke them.
- If they know roughly how long the attack lasted.
- If they lost control of their bowels or bladder while they were being strangled, or afterwards.
- If they're finding it hard to speak or swallow.
- If their vision or hearing doesn't seem quite the same as normal (for example, is their vision blurry, are they seeing stars, or did they lose their vision completely at any point; or do they have ringing or buzzing in their ears, do they feel pressure in their ears, or did they lose their hearing completely at any point).
- If they:
  - o feel agitated or short-tempered,
  - o are having problems concentrating,
  - o are hallucinating,
  - o are having memory problems,
  - o feel dizzy or have headaches, or
  - o don't feel as strong as they usually do, or find their strength dips now and again.

**The information gathered through these questions is important to share with medical professionals and/or police.**

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<https://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com>

The Identification, Care and Advocacy of Strangulation Victims - Information for Front Line Workers and Crisis Advocates. Morag McLean RN (2009) [https://www.von.ca/sites/default/files/files/strangulation\\_protocol\\_final\\_may\\_2012.pdf](https://www.von.ca/sites/default/files/files/strangulation_protocol_final_may_2012.pdf)



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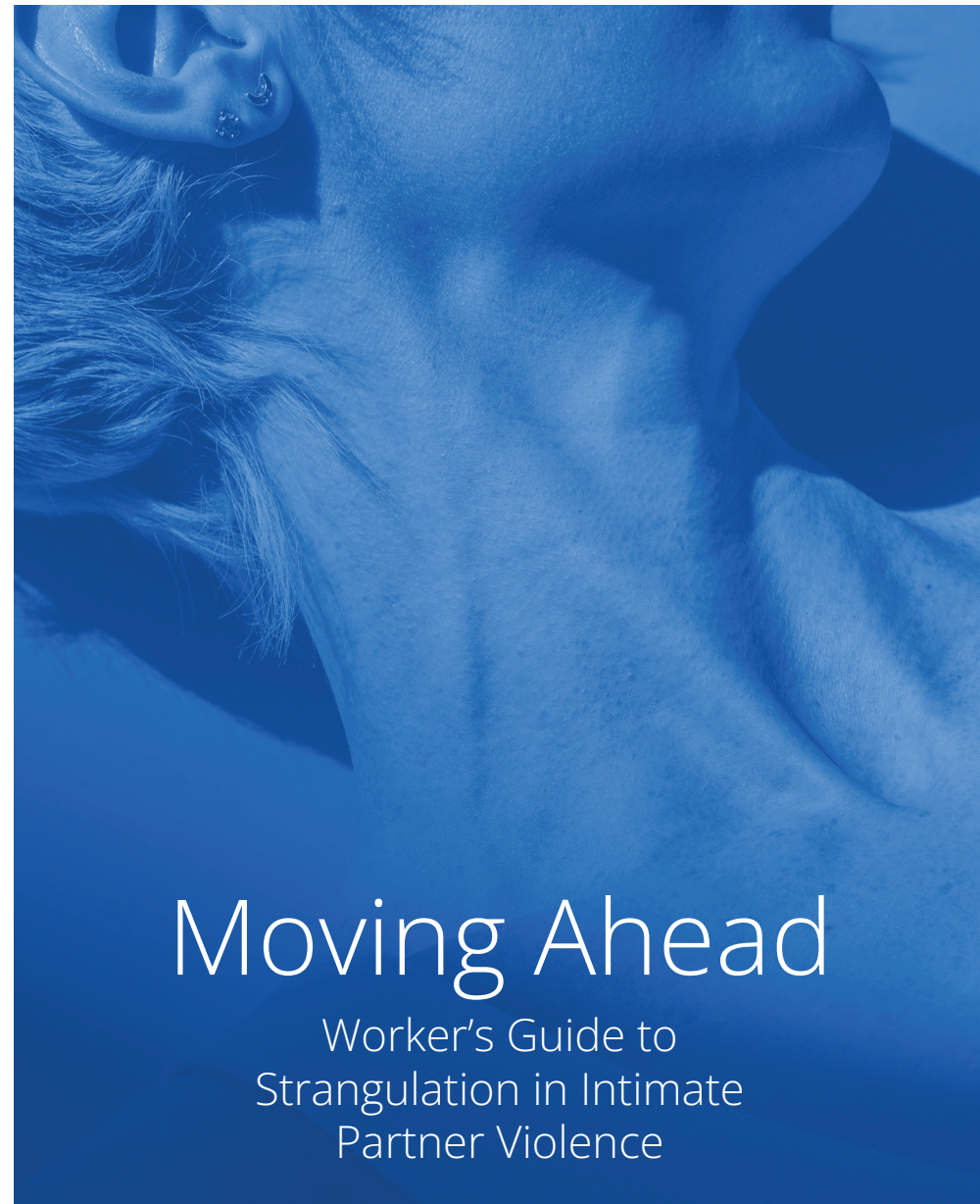


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## Moving Ahead

Worker's Guide to  
Strangulation in Intimate  
Partner Violence



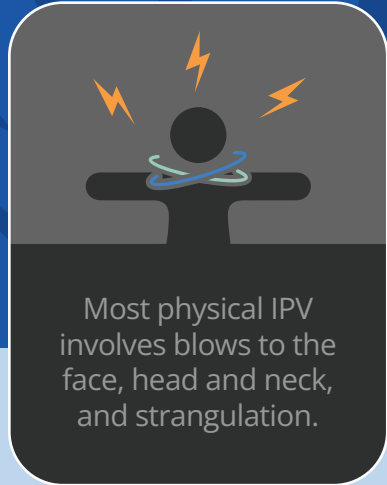
SUPPORTING SURVIVORS  
OF ABUSE AND BRAIN INJURY  
THROUGH RESEARCH

[www.soarproject.ca](http://www.soarproject.ca)

## Did you know?

More than half of women who experience intimate partner violence (IPV) are strangled.

Strangulation is one of the deadliest forms of IPV. It can cause **loss of consciousness** within seconds, and **brain injury and death** within minutes.



### HOW HIGH IS THE RISK?

A woman who's been strangled is **750 times more likely to be murdered** in a subsequent attack. Strangulation is about power. The abuser literally holds the victim's life in their hands.



## What Is strangulation?

People often use the words “choked” and “strangled” interchangeably, but they’re not the same.

When someone is choking, they have something stuck in their airway, which makes it hard or impossible to breathe. In strangulation, pressure is applied to the neck from the outside, blocking necessary blood and oxygen to the brain.

Strangulation can be **manual**, where the abuser uses hands, an arm, or a knee to squeeze or press the neck, or can be done with a **ligature**. That’s when the abuser uses a tie, belt, rope or cord, or even a hard object such as a baseball bat or broom, to squeeze the neck.

## Signs and symptoms

- Raspy voice
- Trouble swallowing/breathing
- Ringing in the ears
- Red spots (called petechiae) in eyes or on skin
- Scratches/bruising on neck, chest, or shoulders
- Swollen or cut lips/tongue
- Loss of memory
- Bloodied or broken nose, or bleeding from the ears
- Nausea and vomiting
- Trouble concentrating, or sleeping
- Loss of consciousness
- Uncontrolled urination/defecation
- No visible signs/symptoms\*

\* Anyone who’s been strangled should seek immediate medical help! Even if there are no visible signs or symptoms, and the survivor says they feel fine, they may have suffered internal injuries that could cause sudden, severe consequences, including death, in the coming months. If they’re pregnant, they may miscarry.