



Brochure  
for adolescents

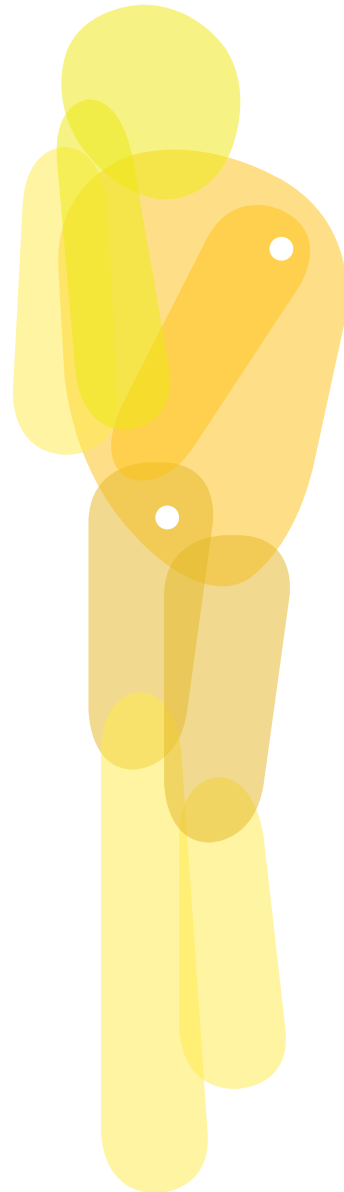
# **INFORMATION** **ABOUT VIOLENCE** **AND ASSOCIATED** **HEALTH CONSEQUENCES**

Association Mémoire Traumatique et Victimologie  
Association Sortir du Silence  
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The violence you endure or have endured, or that you have witnessed, has serious consequences on your physical and mental health.

Violence is an attack on your rights. It is not normal to endure aggressive behavior or physical violence, to be insulted or verbally humiliated, or to be forced to engage in sexual acts with an adult or another young person when you are not ready or willing to do so. These infractions are punishable as either misdemeanors or felonies (such as rape), and enabled by an unjust and unequal society.

**You have rights,  
you can receive help  
And you should be protected.  
The negative health  
consequences of violence  
can be treated.**

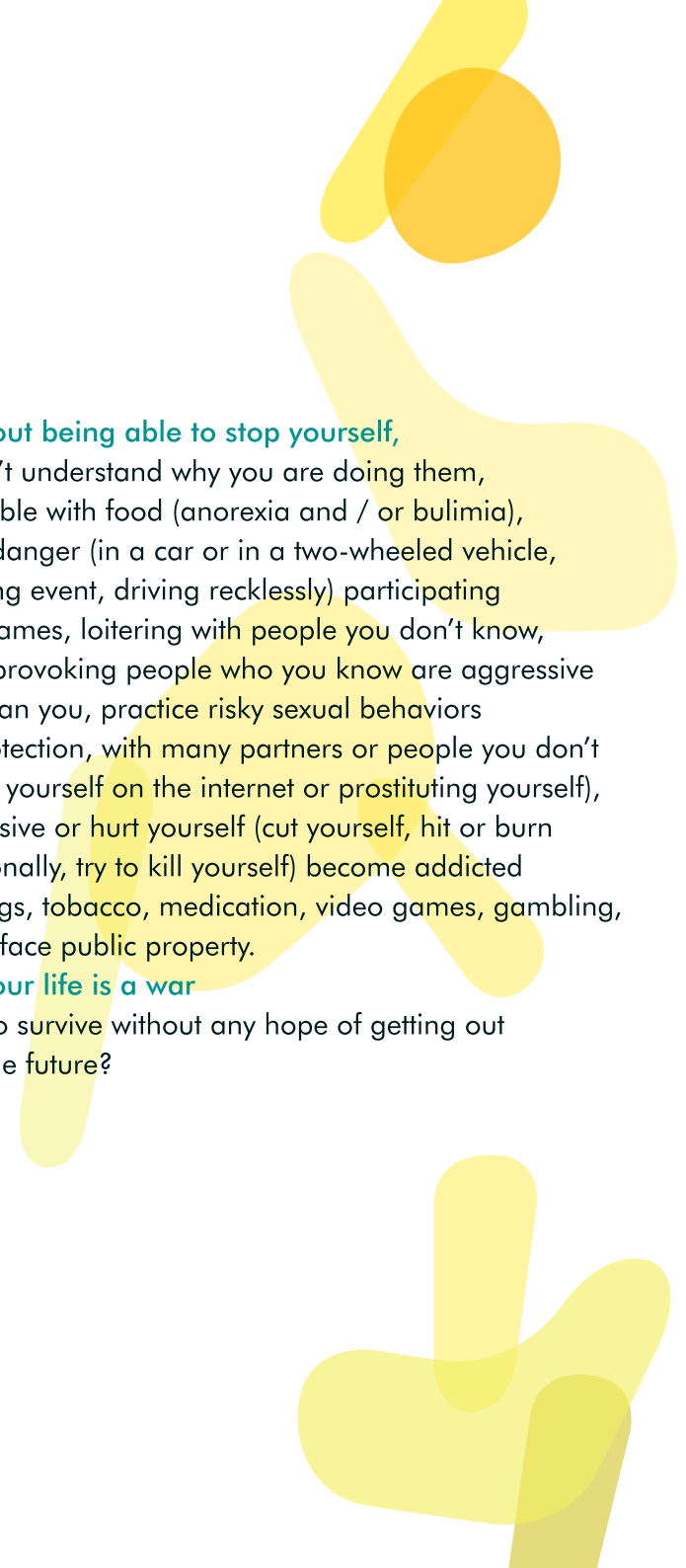


## Do you ever...

... **feel very lonely**, , abandoned, depressed, anxious, unwell in your head or in your body, have flashbacks, thoughts, sensations or images of violence that haunt you, suffer from insomnia or frequent nightmares...

... **feel disconnected**, paralyzed, empty, absent, like you're roleplaying (pretending to be a girl or a boy who is happy, smiling, and who doesn't cause trouble), as if you were someone else, as if your body wasn't yours, feel ashamed of yourself, think that everything is your fault, no longer trust people, feel different, useless, incapable, ugly, valueless, afraid of going crazy.

... **feel afraid** all the time, attentive to everything, controlling, prone to panic attacks (your heart races, your breathing gets faster, you shake, get nauseous, or feel like you're going to die) ; avoid certain situations or places that make you anxious (phobias), or certain subjects of conversation; feel nervous, get angry without understanding why, have extreme thoughts that scare you, not want to do anything or see anyone, not want to go out, to work or to school, speak or even think, feel tired all the time; want to die, kill yourself; have difficulty remembering what you've learned, trouble concentrating or thinking, forget everything.

A large, stylized yellow hand graphic is positioned on the left side of the page. The hand is open, with fingers spread, and its thumb is pointing towards the text. The hand is composed of several overlapping yellow shapes, giving it a soft, organic appearance. It spans most of the vertical height of the page.

do things without being able to stop yourself,  
even if you don't understand why you are doing them,  
like having trouble with food (anorexia and / or bulimia),  
put yourself in danger (in a car or in a two-wheeled vehicle,  
during a sporting event, driving recklessly) participating  
in dangerous games, loitering with people you don't know,  
running away, provoking people who you know are aggressive  
and stronger than you, practice risky sexual behaviors  
(sex without protection, with many partners or people you don't  
know, exposing yourself on the internet or prostituting yourself),  
become aggressive or hurt yourself (cut yourself, hit or burn  
yourself intentionally, try to kill yourself) become addicted  
(to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, medication, video games, gambling,  
sex) shoplift, deface public property.

... think that your life is a war

that you need to survive without any hope of getting out  
and afraid of the future?

## Your unhappiness may be connected to the violence you've endured

Maybe you don't think you're «cut out for life», «too sensitive»  
or simply «born this way», but that's not true: all of these  
challenges and behaviors are consequences of violence.  
These consequences are a result of reactions in your brain  
that allow you to survive violence. They can be treated.

**These problems are a normal reaction  
to an abnormal situation.**

**Today, we know that they are proof  
of psychological trauma,  
an «internal wound» caused by violence.**

## What is violence?

Violent acts include threats or the intentional use of physical force or power over you, to harm you, to subordinate you or to use you. These are acts which lead to, or can lead to, physical or mental trauma, poor development or deprivation.

### Violence can be

... **verbal** : insults, cries, screaming, silence, pretending as if you don't exist.

... **material** : forbidding you to eat, seek treatment, see friends of your choosing, buy what you need to dress yourself, for school or for your daily life, keeping you from making your own choices or taking contraception, forcing you to get an abortion, violating your privacy (entering your bedroom or bathroom, reading your mail, looking into your telephone or computer), confiscating your papers, destroying your personal belongings.

... **mental** : constraints, blackmail, humiliation, denigration (belittling you by any means), harassment, manipulation, threats (to hit you, kill you, abandon you, etc.).

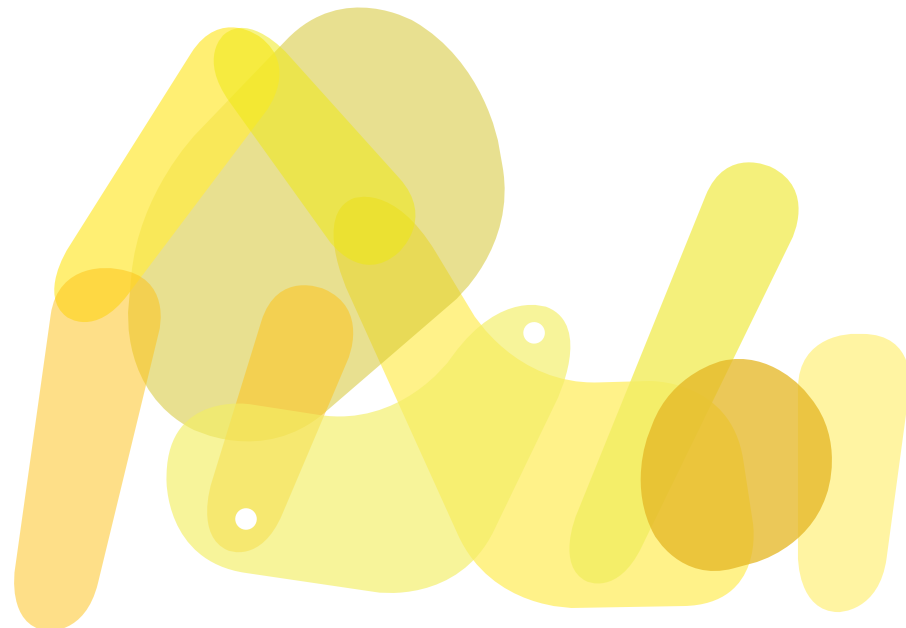
... **physical** : smacks, wounds, burns, getting violent with objects to scare you or using objects against you (hitting you with a belt, broom, shoes, wooden spoon, etc.) isolating you – locking you in, threatening or trying to kill you (strangulation, drowning, with weapons, etc.).



silences > **destruction** > harassment > **fear** > injury  
insults > interdictions > **humiliations** > blackmail > **threat**

# Sexual Violence

... **rape** : penetration of a sexual nature, vaginal, oral or anal penetration with the genitals, fingers or an object, penetration that was forced upon you or that someone tried to force upon you through violence, threat, constraint or surprise. This is a crime against your person, a felony that the law considers more severe when committed against someone who is younger than 15 or someone who has a disability, or if the perpetrator is an adult with authority over you (someone in your family, who is charge of you or who cares for you, a guardian or teacher, etc.) or if multiple aggressions occur simultaneously (rape by multiple aggressors).



... **sexual assault** : if someone touches or tries to touch your body (your breasts, butt, genitals), if you are forced to look at or touch someone else's body or to perform or watch sexual acts, if someone kisses you or tries to kiss you against your will or consent, if someone takes photos or videos of you or forces you to watch pornographic films.

... **attempted sexual assault** : if you are younger than 15 no one over the age of 18 has the right to engage in sexual relations with you (to kiss you, touch you sexually, show you their genitals, show you pornographic images or films, masturbate in front of you, want to see you perform sexual acts, have sex with you), even if there is no violence, threat, constraint or surprise. Even if you think you want to. The law considers that you are not yet sufficiently mature to know what kind of sexual behavior you want to engage in, and that you can't easily say no to an adult who asks you to behave in a sexual nature.

**And if you are between 15 and 18 years old, the law considers that an adult has authority over you and does not have the right to engage in sexual behavior with you.**

... **incest** : an attempted sexual assault, sexual assault or rape committed by someone within your family (your parents, step parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters or half-brothers and half-sisters, uncles and aunts, cousins), the law considers that incest is one of the worst types of child sex crimes.

... **sexual harassment** : the act of repeatedly enduring commentary or physical behavior of a sexual nature that threatens your dignity due to its degrading or humiliating character, or creating a situation that is intimidating, hostile or offensive, and pressuring you to accept sexual acts.

... **hazing** : the act of being led (against your will or otherwise) to be subjected to or to commit humiliating or degrading of a sexual nature, within an educational or socio-educational context.

... **sexual exploitation (prostitution)** : to make you perform acts of a sexual nature in exchange for money or other goods (housing, work): prostitution, pornography.

... **forced marriages**: if your family pressures or obliges you to marry someone against your will, whether in a civil, religious or cultural ceremony.

... **sexual mutilation** : mutilation of a part of the female genital organs, including excision or infibulation. If the girl who endures sexual mutilation is under the age of 15, it's considered a felony. For a girl older than 15, it is considered a misdemeanor. French law applies even when the mutilation occurs outside of France.



agressions > harassment > **rape** > **mutilations**  
pressions > **constraint** > prostitution > psychological trauma

## Violence,

Even if violence occurs only once,  
threatening your rights,  
it's a manipulation  
to make you believe  
that you don't have any value  
that you must submit  
that you are not in charge of yourself  
and that you are no more than an object,  
that you are guilty and that you deserved it,  
and sometimes even that you don't have the right to live  
But that's not true, it's a lie!  
You are never responsible for the violence you endure  
The person who is violent towards you is responsible.

**You have rights and value**

**No one has the right to harm you,**

**To humiliate you,**

**or to take advantage of you or of your body.**

## Violence is :

... **serious** : it is an attack against your body or your thoughts,  
it is a lack of respect for your right to live in security,  
it is an offense punishable by law.

... **frequent** : it is committed by all kinds of people and families  
(wealthy and disadvantaged) of all cultures and origins, but we  
don't often take it seriously. We have too often acted as if nothing  
happened, as if you invented it, as if it were «nothing»,  
not serious, normal, as if it were for your own «good»,  
as if it were your fault because you provoked it or you didn't  
protect yourself enough! And sometimes, when it concerns sexual  
violence, as if you wanted it, as if it were love, as if you liked it.

... **often committed by someone you know well** :

someone in your family, a friend, boyfriend or girlfriend,  
a teacher, guardian, coach, a healthcare professional, etc.

... **intentional** : people who commit violence want  
to impose themselves through force and will find any pretext  
for doing so.

... **characteristic** : it's almost always the strongest who  
are violent against those who are weaker, or who are more  
vulnerable. Adults against children and teenagers, able-bodied  
people against disabled people, the big against the small,  
men against women (in a couple, at work, and in all sorts  
of sexual violence).

# How can violence make you sick ?

## Mechanisms of psychological trauma :

Under the influence of pain, fear or confusion, because it cannot escape, the brain becomes blocked, as if it were paralyzed, and this often keeps you from reacting, which is normal (no one can blame you for not screaming, saying no, defending yourself or fleeing).

## You become overwhelmed by a state of extreme stress that the brain can't control

This stress is dangerous for the heart and neurons. In order to protect them, the brain «trips out», shutting down its ability to feel stress like it would shut down an overwhelmed electric circuit.

## To trip out, the brain creates natural drugs

which numb you, you «disassociate,» you compartmentalize your feelings into small pieces so that you feel less pain:

- ... The body is there, but the mind is elsewhere
- ... You might feel like you're having an out-of-body experience
- ... You might no longer feel your body, even though you see everything
- ... You might be paralyzed
- ... You might believe that what's happening isn't real
- ... You might laugh strangely even though you're in pain or feeling scared.

**The people who commit violence are the only ones responsible for their behavior. Sexual violence, familial violence and violence in romantic relationships are the most dangerous forms, girls and young women are the most at risk.**

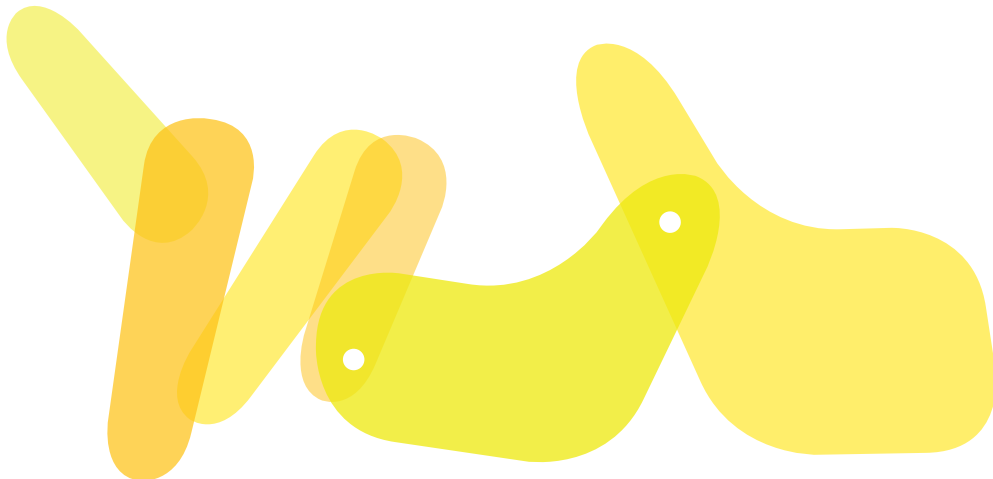


## These are called traumatic memories

... But this **disassociation** keeps the brain from correctly remembering what happened. Memories aren't saved, as they would normally be, in the brain's «hard drive».

### **Memories are cut up into pieces.**

You might forget all or a part of the violence you endured, and other memories might come back after a lot of time has passed. These memories, because they're saved when the brain is tripping out, are different than others: they are blocked in a certain part of the brain. Even if a violent event occurred a long time ago, you might feel like you're reliving it when you have flashbacks, nightmares or panic attacks. And you may feel this again and again, every time something happens that reminds you of violence, every time you're triggered by a gesture, a word, a place, a smell, a certain type of pain or stress, something who is behaving aggressively, a film, etc.



**Life becomes a minefield** where «traumatic memories» might surface at any moment, bringing back the same sensations, the same fear, the same panic, the same pain, the same odors, the same noises, the same injuries and the same terrible words... So you try to avoid stepping on a mine, you avoid everything that might remind you of violence, you avoid thinking about it, you avoid speaking about it. If too many things remind you of violence, or if the violence continues, you try to numb yourself by smoking, drinking, doing drugs of anything that might cause the **brain to «trip out»** so that you feel less pain.



## These are numbing behaviors.

What causes the brain to «trip out» again and again?

Things that you do and that you don't understand, that others don't understand because they make it seem like you like pain, stress and violence.

**For example**, you do dangerous things, you are capable of harming yourself or putting yourself in danger, you cut yourself, burn yourself, you are obsessed with violent movies, extreme sports or violent games, you engage in sexually dangerous behavior, you provoke others, you are violent... this causes the brain to «trip out» again and again because there's danger or extreme stress.

**The brain makes its drugs and, as a result, you don't feel fear or pain.**



Unfortunately, tripping out «recharges» the traumatic memories. **You tripping out repeatedly**, often doing things that are increasingly strange and dangerous so that you can avoid feeling anything. You might think you're a bad person, crazy or guilty...

**But all you're trying to do is survive and to feel less pain**, and most of the time the people around you don't understand your behavior and might criticize you or take advantage of your difficulties (being easily paralyzed in the face of a threat, or disconnecting and not being able to defend yourself) in order to further harm you.

**With traumatic memories, you might be overwhelmed**

- By the abuse, terrible words, mistrust, hate, perverted excitement, desire to hurt yourself or to tear yourself down, by visions of the people who hurt you, and you might think that these thoughts are coming from you, that you are insulting yourself, hating yourself, and mistrusting yourself, that you're the one who thinks you're worthless, an idiot, ugly, guilty, that you deserve what you got, that you love to suffer, that you want to harm yourself, that you want to tear yourself down, that you want to kill yourself and that you don't have the right to talk about it or to defend yourself. These aren't your thoughts. They are part of your aggressor's set-up and it's his or her words that are overwhelming you.

**You might identify what's coming from your aggressors**


(via the traumatic memories) and not you when you think you are incoherent, when you don't recognize your own behavior or thoughts, and when you realize you'd never think the same thing about someone else in the same situation.

## The consequences on your health

Beyond the wounds and bodily scars you might have, you might be feeling sick and :

... **sleep poorly**, you might feel tired, often ill,  
... **have pain everywhere**, have chronic headaches, back pain...  
... **have chronic stomach pains**, feel nauseous, vomit often, have gynecological problems, or skin rashes like eczema...  
... **have a very fast heart beat** (palpitations), have difficulty breathing and, later in life, hypertension, diabetes or cardiac diseases.

... **rape is a medical emergency**, it can lead to unwanted pregnancies, STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections).  
It is really important to have access to emergency contraception (an emergency pill that can be taken from the morning after to 72 hours after, or five days after with a prescription).  
If necessary, you have access to general abortion care up to 12 weeks into pregnancy and, beyond 12 weeks to special abortion care for pregnancies resulting from rape (a medical decision taken to protect your health) and also rapid access to preventative treatments for STIs (up to 48 hours after for HIV, and Hepatitis B and C).



**Violence**  
**has an important impact**  
**on health.**

**Medical care**  
**and specialized psychological care**  
**are useful and allow you to connect the effects**  
**of psychological trauma to violence**  
**and to understand those effects,**  
**to control them,**  
**to heal the traumatic memories**  
**and to avoid other consequences.**

## What should you do?

**You have rights,  
The right to not endure violence,  
To say no, to defend yourself,  
To denounce violence,  
The file a complaint,  
To receive help and treatment,  
The right to justice and reparations.**

If you are in danger call the police or the police station (17) or an emergency number like 119, if you are hurt the SAMU (15) or firefighters (18). Rape is a medical emergency for which you should receive care and legal assistance (gathering evidence, taking biological samples to run a DNA test) and for all types of violence it is important to see a doctor and to receive treatment and get an official certificate that attests to your wounds and injuries. You can file a complaint in police stations and with public prosecutors.

**Let's Talk  
About It**

... **Don't stay alone, talk about what happened** even if doing so is often difficult because it might make you relive the violence and you might feel scared if you've been threatened, or afraid of other people's reactions. The best thing would be for others to come to you, to ask you questions in order to understand whether you have previously or are currently enduring violence, to understand why you seem not to be doing well. More and more professionals are learning how to ask these questions. You can talk to adults who you trust or to friends, to your doctor, to a social worker or school psychologists, to the police, you can also call the hotline dedicated to victims of violence (you'll find the contact information on the last page).

... **More and more laws and resources exist to fight against violence, to bring it to an end, you can file a complaint and receive protection.** If the person you spoke to doesn't believe you or makes you feel guilty and has some kind of judgement about your situation, that person is in the wrong, even if he or she is a professional. If this happens, keep trying until you find the right person who can help you.

... **If you recognize yourself in this text**, if it reminds you of certain things that you feel or problems you have had, speak up! If you are having suicidal thoughts, don't stay alone. You can get help and with that help you can receive protection and feel better in your head, and in your life. People who use violence against you can and should be stopped and brought to justice. Specialized professionals can help them change their ways.

## **This is where you can get more information or ask for help**

Tel. 3919 Violences conjugales

Tel. 0800059595 Viols Femmes Informations

Women Safe Institut de Santé Génésique

20 rue Armagis

78 100 Saint Germain en laye

Tel. 01 39 10 85 35

[www.women-safe.org](http://www.women-safe.org)

Centre de psychotrauma

Institut de Victimologie

131 rue Saussure

75017 Paris

Tel. 01 43 80 44 40

[www.institutdevictimologie.fr](http://www.institutdevictimologie.fr)

Centre Minkowski

12 rue Jacquemont

75017 Paris

Tel. 01 53 06 84 84

[www.minkowska.com](http://www.minkowska.com)

Maison des femmes du Centre Hospitalier Saint Denis

1 chemin du Moulin Basset

93 200 Saint Denis

Tel. 01 42 35 61 28

[www.lamaisondesfemmes.fr](http://www.lamaisondesfemmes.fr)

Centre de consultation Primo Levi

107 Avenue de Parmentière

75011 Paris

Tel. 01 43 14 88 50

[www.primolevi.org](http://www.primolevi.org)

and the site

[www.memoiretraumatique.org](http://www.memoiretraumatique.org)

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