



## VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS

- \* Do you think you might be in a destructive relationship?
- \* If it hurts or scares you, it's not healthy.
- \* Relationships should make both partners feel good about themselves and about each other.

Domestic violence occurs when a relationship is based on power and control. The abuse can be **physical, verbal, emotional, or sexual**. Violent incidents are often accompanied by other types of abuse. They may not be as obvious, but establish a pattern of intimidation and control in the relationship.

Chances are that you know someone who is being abused. Abuse occurs in every race, class, and educational background, from doctors to truck drivers. **3 to 4 million women are battered each year in the US** and actual number may be ten times this figure. The FBI reports that 30% of female homicide victims are killed by their husbands or boyfriends.

Spouse abuse has other serious implications--**25 to 45% of women who are beaten are pregnant, 70% of men who batter their wives also batter their children**. Male children who witness adult-to-adult domestic violence are, as adults, 700 times more likely to beat their female partners. Male children who also are physically abused are, as adults, 1000 times more likely to beat their female partners.

### What is Abuse?

Generally, there are three different types of abuse associated with domestic violence--physical, sexual, and emotional. It may include one or more of these types of mistreatment:

**PHYSICAL**--This is the most obvious type of abuse. It includes kicking, hitting, biting, choking, pushing, hair pulling, throwing across the room or down on the floor, prevention from seeking health care or taking medications, and assaults or threats with weapons. It can also include a physical use of objects such as throwing objects, breaking personal items, punching walls, tearing clothes and violence to pets. Destruction of property or pets should be taken seriously. It is symbolic. It is a threat. It's violence.

**SEXUAL**--Sexual abuse occurs when a person is forced to participate in sex (or specific sexual acts) against his/her will, forced or pressured to participate in sex with others or in the presence of others, subjected to the use of weapons or objects during sex, pressured or prevented from using birth control, or when sex and affection is withheld to manipulate or control. Sexual abuse seems to be primarily acts of aggression in which sex is the method used to humiliate, hurt, degrade, and dominate the partner. The violence in the sexual relationship seems to escalate with time.

**EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL**--This type of abuse, though not as obvious as the previous two, is also traumatic and the effects long-lasting. It is often easy to deny, but can be the most difficult to recover from. This abuse is more than verbal arguments--it is the systematic destruction of an individual's self-esteem.

Emotional and psychological abuse may involve the following practices:

- **Economic Domination.** Frequently, the abuser tries to control their partner by having complete control over the finances. They may try to keep the victim from working to encourage the economic dependence. Even if the partner has their own resources, they are made to account for every penny.
- **Using Children.** Abusers may use the children to maintain their power and control. They may belittle or degrade children as a way to harass the victim. They may threaten to take the children away should he/she leave.
- **Intimidation.** Abusers may frighten their victims by using looks, actions, gestures, or loud voices; by smashing things; or by destroying the survivor's property. They often act like bullies, asserting what they believe is their entitlement to the partner's services. Verbal degradation, cursing and name-calling can contribute to the humiliation.
- **Threats.** Abusers may make threats from harming the children to committing suicide. These threats add to the anxiety and fear experienced by the victim.
- **Extreme Controlling Behavior.** Abusers may control their partner's activities, companions, whereabouts, etc. They are intrusive, needing to always know what the partner is thinking, feeling or doing, and are possessive and jealous of his/her relationship with others.
- **Isolation.** Abusers often control what their partner does, whom they see and where they go. Many abusers feel very threatened by anyone with whom their partner has contact. This expression of jealousy serves to limit the partner's contact with others.

### **The Cycle of Violence**

Domestic violence affecting females usually follows a cycle that repeats itself continually. This cycle consists of the following three stages:

**PHASE I--TENSION OR BUILD UP--**Increased tension, anger, blaming and arguing. This phase may last a week, months, or years. However, it usually becomes more frequent as the cycle is repeated. It typically involves an increase in verbal and minor physical abuse. Sometimes this is enough to frighten the woman into submission. She knows what will happen if she does not comply. At this point, the woman may be amenable to sources of help.

**PHASE 2--BATTERING INCIDENT--**Battering--hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, use of objects or weapons, sexual abuse, verbal threats and abuse. During this phase, the batterer loses his desire or ability to control his anger and violence. He learns that battering helps to "relieve stress" and "change her behavior." Just following this episode, the batterer and his partner are most likely to seek help. She is hurt and scared, and he is feeling ashamed, guilty, and humiliated.

**PHASE 3--CALM OR HONEYMOON STAGE--**(This stage may decrease over time.) The man may deny violence; say he was drunk, say he's sorry and promise it will never happen again. The woman is least amenable to help at this point. However, the batterer may be most open to help at the start of this phase because typically, he is remorseful and wishes to please (keep) his partner. At the peak of this stage, both parties may deny or distort what happened.

Then, Phase I begins again . . . The truth is that change is unlikely unless you get help. Wives want to believe their husbands when they promise it will never happen again, but in most cases it does. It not only recurs, but escalates each time. Studies indicate that most abusers who seek professional help do so only after their wives have left. Otherwise, they have no incentive to change.

## Myths

There are several myths associated with violence in relationships. It is important to realize that these are false, and that it is not your fault.

- 1. I'M THE ONLY ONE.** Three to four million women are battered each year. Every 16 seconds a woman is beaten in her home. Every 6 minutes a rape occurs in the United States. Many women don't talk about it because they feel afraid or ashamed. Others simply don't want to admit a problem exists.
- 2. I ASKED FOR IT.** No one asks to be hurt! It doesn't matter what you do--if your partner abuses you, it's wrong.
- 3. RAPISTS AND BATTERERS ARE STRANGE, PERVERTED MEN.** Batterers come from every race, class, and educational level. They may be doctors, lawyers, truck drivers, ministers, and teachers.
- 4. THIS IS NORMAL.** It does not matter if he grew up this way or you grew up this way or if this is the way it's always been. These are not excuses. There are no excuses for abusive behavior.
- 5. NO ONE CAN HELP ME.** Wrong! You have to take the first steps of deciding there is a problem and calling someone. There are people out there who understand and can help.
- 6. LOVE AND VIOLENCE CANNOT EXIST TOGETHER IN THE SAME RELATIONSHIP.** Most abusers and victims love each other. Many abusers act in loving, caring ways some of the time. Most survivors love the abuser and want the abuse to stop. However, over time the loving periods lessen, change, or fade as the abuse takes its toll.

## Why Do Women Stay?

People often do not understand why a woman stays in an abusive relationship. They may think or say it could never be them, but statistics show that domestic violence is by no means rare. The truth is that if you do find yourself in an abusive relationship, it is usually very difficult to leave, even if you aren't married. Some of the reasons most often given are listed below:

- She fears the unknown or is afraid of being alone.
- She has low self-esteem and little self-confidence.
- She hopes he will change.
- She might come from an abusive family and think violence is normal.
- She wants to make her marriage work, or her religion or friends believe she should stay in her marriage, no matter what.
- She believes the children need a father or that he will take the children away.
- She is financially dependent on him.
- She feels guilty and ashamed.
- She has no emotional support from others.
- She believes there is no way out.
- She is afraid of retaliation and/or worse beatings or that he will find her no matter where she goes.
- She believes he will harm himself.

## Signs of an Abused Woman and an Abusive Man

It can be very difficult to spot an abused woman because they are ashamed and may make concerted efforts to hide any signs of abuse. They may make up stories about injuries. The following list may or may not be helpful in identifying an abused woman:

- She will act ambivalent, guilty and seem fearful of her living conditions.
- Feels isolated and distrusts others.
- Has few friends and limited contact with others.
- Is emotionally and economically dependent upon her batterer.
- Has poor self-image and low self-esteem.
- May have been abused as a child or witnessed others in her birth family being abused.

- May express anger, embarrassment, or shame.
- Feels powerless to escape her situation.
- Believes she might be insane.
- Has unexplained injuries that may go untreated.

Many women wonder if they are getting involved with a man who may be abusive. Below is a list of behaviors seen in people who beat their wives or girlfriends. The last four signs are almost always seen if the person is a batterer. If the person has three or more of the other behaviors, there is a strong potential for violence. In some cases, the person may have only a few of these behaviors, but they are very exaggerated (extreme jealousy over ridiculous things). Initially, the batterer will try to explain his behavior as signs of love and concern, the behaviors will become more severe and serve to dominate the woman. The behaviors are:

- Jealousy.
- Controlling behavior.
- Quick involvement.
- Unrealistic expectations--She is supposed to take care of everything for him and in the home.
- Isolation--The man tries to cut the woman off from all friends and family.
- Blames others for his problems.
- Blames others for his feelings--"You control how I feel."
- Hypersensitivity--The man is easily insulted and defensive.
- Cruelty to animals or children.
- "Playful" use of force during sex.
- Verbal abuse.
- Rigid sex roles--Man expects woman to serve him.
- Severe mood swings--Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde.
- Past battering--He may say he has hit women in the past, but they made him do it.
- Threats of violence.
- Breaking or striking objects.
- Any force during an argument.

Call the Victim Assistance Network (VAN) Hotline at **703-360-7273** and (TTY) 703-799-8253 or the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-7233** and TTY 1-800-787-3224

### **What do I do if I am an abuser?**

If you are an abuser, there are steps you can take as well. Admit that you are hurting someone and make a commitment to stop. Talk to trusted adults and friends about your problem. Call a hotline or find a counselor or support group.

### **Violence Wheel- ABUSE IS NEVER A ONE TIME EVENT!**

The chart below is a way of looking at the behaviors abusers use to get and keep control in their relationships. Battering is a choice. It is used to gain power and control over another person. Physical abuse is only one part of a system of abusive behaviors.

This chart uses the wheel to show the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. Each part shows a way to control or gain power.



## PERSONALIZED SAFETY PLAN

Your safety is the most important thing. Listed below are tips to help keep you safe. If you are in an abusive relationship

- Have important phone numbers nearby for you and your children. Numbers to have are the police, hotlines, friends and the local shelter.
- Tell friends or neighbors you could tell about the abuse. Ask them to call the police if they hear angry or violent noises. If you have children, teach them how to dial 911. Make up a code word that you can use when you need help.
- Plan and practice ways to get out of your home safely
- Identify safe places in your home where there are exits and no weapons. If you feel abuse is going to happen try to get your abuser to one of these safer places.
- Try to get any and all weapons out of the house.

- Even if you do not plan to leave, think of where you could go and how you might leave. Try doing things that get you out of the house - taking out the trash, walking the pet or going to the store. Put together a bag of things you use everyday and hide it where it is easy for you to get.
- Rehearse your safety plan often.

### **If you consider leaving your abuser, think about...**

- Four places you could go if you leave your home.
- People who might help you if you left. Think about people who will keep a bag for you. Think about people who might lend you money. Make plans for your pets.
- Keep change for phone calls or getting a cell phone.
- Open a bank account or getting a credit card in your name.
- How you could take your children with you safely. There are times when taking your children with you may put all of your lives in danger. You need to protect yourself to be able to protect your children.

### **ITEMS TO TAKE, IF POSSIBLE**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children (if it is safe)</li> <li>• Money</li> <li>• Keys to car, house, work</li> <li>• Extra clothes</li> <li>• Medicine</li> <li>• Important papers for you and your children</li> <li>• Birth certificates</li> <li>• Social security cards</li> <li>• School and medical records</li> <li>• Bankbooks, credit cards</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Driver's license, Car registration</li> <li>• Welfare identification</li> <li>• Passports, green cards, work permits</li> <li>• Lease/rental agreement</li> <li>• Mortgage payment book, unpaid bills</li> <li>• Insurance papers</li> <li>• PPO, divorce papers, custody orders</li> <li>• Address book</li> <li>• Pictures, jewelry, things that mean a lot</li> <li>• Children's items (toys, blanket)</li> </ul> |
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### **If you have left your abuser do the following...**

- Get a cell phone.
- Get a PPO from the court. Keep a copy with you all the time. Give a copy to the police, people who take care of your children, their schools and your boss.
- Change the locks, install stronger doors, smoke detectors, a security system and outside lights.
- Tell friends and neighbors that your abuser no longer lives with you. Ask them to call the police if they see your abuser near your home or children.
- Tell child care providers the names of people who are allowed to pick them up. If you have a PPO protecting your children, give their teachers and babysitters a copy of it.
- Tell someone at work about what has happened. Ask that person to screen your calls. If you have a PPO that includes where you work, consider giving your boss a copy of it and a picture of the abuser. Think about and practice a safety plan for your workplace. This should include going to and from work.
- Do not use the same stores or businesses that you did when you were with your abuser.
- Join a support group and identify friends you can contact when you need emotional support.

**WARNING:** Abusers try to control their victim's lives. When abusers feel a loss of control - like when victims try to leave them - the abuse often gets worse. Take special care when you leave. Keep being careful even after you have left.

