



CENTERSTONE

Wellness Program

Love is Caring Not Controlling ***Signs & Solutions in Domestic Violence***

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of behavior in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. The abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional, or include threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure or wound someone.

Domestic violence can happen to anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender. It can happen to couples that are married, living together or who are dating. Domestic violence affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels. While domestic violence can affect men, the large majority (85%) of its victims are women. Therefore, this article will focus on the most common type, where the male is the abuser in an intimate relationship.

Startling Statistics:

- 4 million American women experience a serious assault by a partner during an average 12-month period.
- Some estimates say almost 1 million incidents of violence occur against a current or former spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend per year.
- Their partner harassed 74% of employed battered women while they were at work.
- Seventy-five percent of murder-suicides occurred in the home.

You may be in an emotionally abusive relationship if your partner:

Calls you names, insults you or continually criticizes you.
Controls what you do, whom you see or talk to or where you go.
Does not trust you and acts jealous or possessive.
Tries to isolate you from family or friends.
Monitors where you go, who you call and who you spend time with.
Does not want you to work.
Controls finances or refuses to share money.
Punishes you by withholding affection.
Expects you to ask permission.
Threatens to hurt you, the children, your family or your pets.
Humiliates you in any way.

If you answered, “yes” to any one of these questions, you may be in an abusive relationship.

The Cycle of Violence

Domestic violence events may occur in a variety of patterns—the woman may experience ongoing, nonstop abuse, or the abuse may stop and start. One pattern of abuse often seen in a violent relationship begins with a tension-building phase, followed by the actual abusive act, and then a calm, making-up phase often called the honeymoon phase.

The tension-building phase includes increasing anger on the part of the abuser coupled with attempts by the woman to avoid violence. On the other hand, the woman may also attempt to bring on the violence to “get it over with.” The episode of acute abuse may include various forms of abuse and may occur for an indefinite amount of time.

The honeymoon phase that follows the abuse often includes both excuses for the abusive episode and expressions of love for the woman. The abuser may deny the violence or blame his actions on his own drunkenness or the behavior or drunkenness of the woman. The abuser may promise the woman that the abuse will never happen again

A Note about Older Battered Women

Older battered women are a nearly invisible, yet tragically sizable population and uniquely vulnerable to domestic violence. Older women are more likely to be bound by traditional and cultural ideology that prevents them from leaving an abusive spouse or from seeing themselves as a victim. Older women are very often financially dependent on their abusive spouse and do not have access to the financial resources they need to leave an abusive relationship. Many older women find themselves isolated from their family, friends and community, due to their spouses' neglect and abuse. This is especially true because older women suffer greater rates of chronic illness, which makes them dependent upon their spouses or caregivers and thus, reluctant or unable to report abuse.

Getting Help

Here are some suggestions if you think you may be in a domestic violence situation:

S - Think of safe places you can go, and safe people whom you trust.

A - Ask for help, do not go it alone, a number of resources are available for support (crisis, emotional, legal).

F - Think of your family you are also protecting. Children are affected also.

E - Escape through planning: professionals will help you develop a detailed safety plan for leaving the relationship.

T - Remember there is no excuse for intimidation, control, and violence; do not be fooled by the cycle – the honeymoon phase of the apologies.

Y - You are valuable! DV is more than a relationship problem - it is a crime. Only you can take care of yourself and your children. Take the control back and seek help today.

Both short and long-term measures must be considered. Short-term measures consist of assistance programs that protect the individual woman who has been or is being abused. They often focus on the critical period after a woman leaves her home, providing her with

food, shelter, and guidance. This is the period when a woman is most at-risk from the perpetrator seeking retribution, or when she might return to the home out of a sense of hopelessness. Long-term measures seek to educate the public and empower the woman to re-establish her life without violence.

Any response should involve an interrelationship between the health, legal and social sectors, so that the woman is not continually referred to another agency. One innovative approach is the use of "family crisis centers," or "victim advocates" to act as the woman's link to the various sectors.

Support can come in various forms:

Crisis Intervention:

- Crisis intervention services
- Crisis hot lines
- Shelters or other emergency residential facilities
- Medical services
- Transportation networks
- Laws that allow either victims or perpetrators to be removed from the home

Emotional Support:

- Self-help support groups
- Assertiveness training
- Self-esteem and confidence-building sessions
- Parenting skills courses

Advocacy and Legal Assistance:

- Access to and custody of children
- Property matters
- Financial support
- Restraining orders
- Public assistance benefits
- Help with immigration status

Other Supportive Services:

- Housing and safe accommodations
- Child care
- Access to community services

Why Do Victims Stay?

Outsiders find it difficult to understand why anyone would stay in a violent relationship. Victims are often blamed and labeled as weak and needy. Some people believe that if a woman stays in an abusive relationship she must somehow like it or need to be beaten to feel worthy.

But the issue is more complex than simply leaving or staying. A woman may fear that the abuser will hurt her and her children or take her children away. She may have limited financial options. She may blame herself. She may stay because she does not want to break up the family or for religious reasons. Also, she may still love her abuser and hope that things will get better.

If you know someone who is being abused, be a good listener and supportive friend. Remind her that she and her children are worth better treatment. You may be able to help a victim understand her options. In turn, understand if she is reluctant to leave. She knows her abuser best and what options are safest.

How can I help a friend or family member who is being abused?

Don't be afraid to let him or her know that you are concerned for their safety. Help your friend or family member recognize the abuse. Tell him or her you see what is going on and that you want to help. Help them recognize that what is happening is not "normal" and that they deserve a healthy, non-violent relationship.

Acknowledge that he or she is in a very difficult and scary situation. Let your friend or family member know that the abuse is not their fault. Reassure him or her that they are not alone and that there is help and support out there.

Be supportive. Listen to your friend or family member. Remember that it may be difficult for him or her to talk about the abuse. Let him or her know that you are available to help whenever they may need it. What they need most is someone who will believe and listen to them.

Be non-judgmental. Respect your friend or family member's decisions. There are many reasons why victims stay in abusive relationships. He or she may leave and return to the relationship many times. Do not criticize his or her decisions or try to guilt them. He or she will need your support even more during those times.

Encourage him or her to participate in activities outside of the relationship with friends and family.

If he or she ends the relationship, continue to be supportive of them. Even though the relationship was abusive, your friend or family member may still feel sad and lonely once it is over. He or she will need time to mourn the loss of the relationship and will especially need your support at that time.

Help him or her to develop a safety plan.

Encourage him or her to talk to people who can provide help and guidance. Find a local domestic violence agency that provides counseling or support groups. Offer to go with him

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or her to talk to family and friends. If he or she has to go to the police, court or a lawyer, offer to go along for moral support.

Remember that you cannot “rescue” him or her. Although it is difficult to see someone you care about get hurt, ultimately the person getting hurt has to be the one to decide that they want to do something about it. It’s important for you to support him or her and help them find a way to safety and peace.

Resources:

The National Center for Victims of Crime, www.ncvc.org

The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, www.ncadv.org

If you or someone you know has concerns about being in an unsafe relationship, please call National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE [7233], or for counseling services in the Middle Tennessee area, call Centerstone at (615) 460-HELP (4357).