

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence and emotional abuse are behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; living together, separated or dating.

Examples of abuse include:

- name-calling or putdowns
- keeping a partner from contacting their family or friends
- withholding money
- stopping a partner from getting or keeping a job
- actual or threatened physical harm
- sexual assault
- stalking
- intimidation

Violence can be criminal and includes physical assault (hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.), sexual abuse (unwanted or forced sexual activity), and stalking. Although emotional, psychological and financial abuse are not criminal behaviors, they are forms of abuse and can lead to criminal violence.

The violence takes many forms and can happen all the time or once in a while. An important step to help yourself or someone you know in preventing or stopping violence is recognizing the warning signs listed on the "Violence Wheel."

### **ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM!**

Victims can be of any age, sex, race, culture, religion, education, employment or marital status. Although both men and women can be abused, most victims are women. Children in homes where there is domestic violence are more likely to be abused and/or neglected. Most children in these homes know about the violence. Even if a child is not physically harmed, they may have emotional and behavior problems.

If you are being abused, REMEMBER ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM! Victims can be of any age, sex, race, culture, religion, education, employment or marital status. Although both men and women can be abused, most victims are women. Children in homes where there is domestic violence are more likely to be abused and/or neglected. Most children in these homes know about the violence. Even if a child is not physically harmed, they may have emotional and behavior problems.

Since abuse can happen to anyone, people can have special concerns.

If you are a person of color ...

You may be afraid of prejudice. You may be afraid of being blamed for going out of your community for help.

- If you are a lesbian, gay, or transgendered person ...
- You may be afraid of having people know about your sexual orientation.
- If you are physically or mentally challenged or elderly ...
- You may depend on your abuser to care for you. You may not have other people to help you.
- If you are a male victim of abuse ...
- You may be ashamed and scared that no one will believe you.
- If you are from another county ...
- You may be afraid of being deported.
- If your religion makes it hard to get help ...
- You may feel like you have to stay and not break up the family.
- If you are a teen ...
- You could be a victim of abuse, or at risk if you are dating someone who:
  - is very jealous and/or spies on you
  - will not let you break off the relationship
  - hurts you in any way, is violent, or brags about hurting other people
  - puts you down or makes you feel bad
  - forces you to have sex or makes you afraid to say no to sex
  - abuses drugs or alcohol; pressures you to use drugs or alcohol
  - has a history of bad relationships and blames it on others

It is hard for teens to leave their abuser if they go to the same school.. They can be scared they may have to reveal their sexual orientation.

If you think you are being abused, think about getting help. If your family or friends warn you about the person you are dating, think about getting help. Tell friends, family members or anybody you can trust. Call a resource listed in this book. There is help for you. You do not have to suffer in silence.

### **If you are a child in a violent home ...**

Most children in these homes know about the violence. Parents may think children do not know about the violence, but most of the time they do. Children often know what happened. They can feel helpless, scared and upset. They may also feel like the violence is their fault.

Violence in the home is dangerous for children. Children live with scary noises, yelling and hitting. They are afraid for their parents and themselves. Children feel bad that they cannot stop the abuse. If they try to stop the fight, they can be hurt. They can also be hurt by things that are thrown or weapons that are used. Children are harmed just by seeing and hearing the violence.

Children in violent homes may not get the care they need. A parent who is being abused may be in too much pain to take good care of their child.

Children who live in violent homes can have many problems. They can have trouble sleeping. They can have trouble in school and getting along with others. They often feel sad and scared all the time. They may grow up feeling bad about themselves. These problems do not go away on their own. They can be there even as the child gets older.

There is help for children in violent homes. Call a resource listed in this book to talk to someone. This can also help if you grew up in a violent home.

### **If you are being stalked ...**

Stalking is repeated harassment that makes you feel scared or upset. A stalker can be someone you know or a stranger. They often bother people by giving them attention they do not want. This can be unwanted phone calls or gifts, or following people by going to where they work or live. It can also be threats to you or your family.

People may think stalking is not dangerous because no one has been physically hurt. Stalking is serious. It is against the law. It often turns to physical violence.

There is help. Find out how to get a Personal Protection Order (PPO). You can also tell the police. You can make a case by keeping track of what the stalker does by:

- telling the police every time the stalker makes contact with you
- keeping a book with you at all times so that you can write down the stalkers contacts
- saving phone messages from the stalker
- saving letters and gifts from the stalker
- writing down information about the stalker, like the way they look, kind of car they drive and license plate number

### **Religious Aspects of the Problem:**

Christian women often feel compelled to stay in abusive relationships by scripture mandating them to "submit to their husbands" or "turn the other cheek."

Jewish women may feel pressure to not bring shame to their community by revealing the abuse in their marriage, or that it is their responsibility to maintain shalom bayit, or peace in the home.

### **Abused women often feel abandoned by God.**

Rather than offering resources and alternatives to battered women, pastors, priests and rabbis have often advised women to return to violent homes and be "better wives."

### **Call the police**

If you feel you are in danger from your abuser at any time, you can call 911 or your local police. HAVEN may be able to provide you with a cell phone that is programmed to only call 911. These phones are for when you need to call the police and cannot get to any other phone.

### **Consider the following:**

- If you are in danger when the police come, they can protect you.
- They can help you and your children leave your home safely.
- They can arrest your abuser when they have enough proof that you have been abused.
- They can arrest your abuser if a personal protection order (PPO) has been violated.
- When the police come, tell them everything the abuser did that made you call.
- If you have been hit, tell the police where. Tell them how many times it happened. Show them any marks left on your body. Marks may take time to show up. If you see a mark after the police leave, call the police to take pictures of the marks. They may be used in court.
- If your abuser has broken any property, show the police.
- The police can give you information on domestic violence programs and shelters.
- The police must make a report saying what happened to you. Police reports can be used in court if your abuser is charged with a crime.
- Get the officers' names, badge numbers, and the report number in case you need a copy of the report.
- A police report can be used to help you get a PPO.
- Get support from friends and family
- Tell your supportive family, friends and co-workers what has happened.
- Find a safe place

It is not fair. You should not have to leave your home because of what your abuser has done. But sometimes it is the only way you will be safe. There are shelters that can help you move to a different city or state. HAVEN can put you in touch with them.

### **Get medical help**

If you have been hurt, go to the hospital or your doctor. Domestic violence advocates (people to help you) may be called to the hospital. They are there to give you support. You may ask medical staff to call one for you.

Medical records can be important in court cases. They can also help you get a PPO. Give all the information about your injuries and who hurt you that you feel safe to give.

### **Special medical concerns**

Sometimes you may not even know you are hurt.

What seems like a small injury could be a big one.

If you are pregnant and you were hit in your stomach, tell the doctor. Many abusers hurt unborn children.

Domestic violence victims can be in danger of closed head injuries. This is because their abusers often hit them in the head. If any of these things happen after a hit to the head, get medical care right away.

Memory loss

Dizziness

Problems with eyesight

Throwing-up

Headache that will not go away

For mor information visit:

<http://www.domesticviolence.org/safe.html>