



San Diego Family Justice Center

Information and Resources for Survivors and Their Supporters

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This packet was created to help and inform domestic violence victims and survivors, their friends, family and supporters. For your safety, please consider keeping this information out of the hands of the person in your life that is abusive.

A survivor of domestic violence has critical needs. Certainly, they include a safe place to be, safe people to be with, and clear, accurate information to help the survivor assess her situation and make decisions.

Information in this packet, provided by the San Diego Family Justice Center, deals with basic aspects of domestic violence. It is intended to help domestic violence survivors and their supporters understand the nature, scope, and direction of the violence. It also outlines strategies for gaining safety from further abuse.

The San Diego Family Justice Center is the most comprehensive "one stop shop" in the nation for victims of family violence and their children. Victims of domestic violence in the City of San Diego can now come to one location to talk to an advocate, get a restraining order, plan for their safety, talk to a police officer, meet with a prosecutor, receive medical assistance, counsel with a chaplain, get help with transportation, and obtain nutrition or pregnancy services counseling.

Our Family Justice Center is a unique, special, safe place where victims of domestic violence are our highest priority. We are committed to providing victims and their children the help they need to break the cycle of family violence that so often damages and destroys families. We are here to help stop domestic violence in the families of San Diego.

If you would like more information, call our toll free Info-Line: **(866) 933-HOPE** (4673). Our trained staff or Volunteers can offer help, schedule an appointment (although not necessary), answer questions, or give you information about the resources available to you at the Family Justice Center.

(Domestic Violence Web V2.0 2/2003)

Domestic Violence

Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence

MYTH: Domestic violence is not common.

FACT: Every 9 seconds in the United States, a man beats a woman. In Oregon, crisis service hotlines annually receive more than 50,000 emergency calls and 37,000 non-emergency calls from survivors of domestic violence.

MYTH: Domestic violence happens only in low-income families.

FACT: Domestic violence happens in all kinds of families, rich and poor, urban, suburban and rural, in every part of the country, in every racial, religious and age group.

MYTH: Alcohol and drugs cause domestic violence.

FACT: Alcohol and drugs do not cause domestic violence. Domestic violence is a choice. Many abusers will make sure they have alcohol or drugs on hand, in order to use them as an excuse for their actions. Abusers will also claim their actions resulted because they could not have the alcohol or drugs.

MYTH: Domestic violence is an anger control issue.

FACT: Domestic violence has nothing to do with anger. Anger is a tool abusers use to get what they want. We know abusers are actually very much in control because they can stop when someone knocks on the door or the phone rings; they often direct punches and kicks to parts of the body where the bruises are less likely to show; and they are not abusing everyone who makes them "angry", but waits until there are no witnesses and abuses the one he says he loves.

MYTH: Abusers and/or victims have low self-esteem.

FACT: Abusers do not have low self-esteem. They believe they are entitled to have power and control over their partner. Abusers will pretend to have low-self esteem, if it will make others believe the violence is not their fault. (see In the Mind of the Abuser for more information on this subject).

FACT: Survivors of abuse may have had great self-esteem at the beginning of the relationship, but the abuser uses emotional abuse: calling her names, putting her down, telling her it is all her fault, in order to destroy her self-esteem. Some abusers look for women with low self-esteem, as they believe she will be more likely to blame herself and less likely to report his behavior. Other abusers will seek women with high self-esteem, as they may represent a greater challenge to control over time.

MYTH: Most assaults are really just a couple of slaps and they are not really harmful.

FACT: More than 30 percent of hospital emergency-room admissions are women who have been abused. Domestic violence is the single greatest cause of injury to women in the United States.

MYTH: Domestic violence happens only once or twice in a relationship.

FACT: Abusers usually escalate violent behaviors in frequency and intensity over time.

continued

Domestic Violence

Myths and Facts about Domestic Violence

continued

MYTH: Some women want to be beaten. They ask for it. They deserve it. Some women go from abuser to abuser – it must be something about them.

FACT: No one deserves to be abused. Everyone has the right to live free of violence. No one would want to have their partner be abusive. Women who find that their second or third partner are abusers will often be blamed by others for the violence – "it must be something about her" or she will blame herself – "I always seem to pick abusers." In reality, the abuser uses the tactic of charm early in the relationship to find out that she was previously abused. He uses this information to blame her for the violence – "it must be something that you are doing wrong, or there would not have been two of us" or to silence her – "you are not going to tell anyone, because if you do they will never believe you because you said that before."

MYTH: Children aren't aware of the violence in their home.

FACT: Studies show that most children are aware of the violence directed at their mother. See Effects of Domestic Violence on Children for ways you can support children who witness domestic violence.

MYTH: Children are not at risk for being hurt or injured.

FACT: Men who abuse their partners are more likely to abuse the children in the home. Domestic violence is the number one predictor for child abuse. Subjecting children to an environment full of violent actions and hateful words is not being a "good dad."

MYTH: Boys who witness violence will grow up to be abusers.

FACT: Studies have found that 30% of male child witnesses choose to become abusers as adults. This means that 70% do not become abusers and are committed to ending the cycle of violence in their lives. The majority of children, male and female, who witness domestic violence become advocates for children when they grow up; committed to raising their children without the use of violence and going into professions where they work to end violence against all children.

Young men in our society must never feel they are destined to become violent. We send a dangerous message to young men and boys when we imply they are fated to become violent and we give abusers an excuse for their behavior.

More Facts:

FACT: Domestic violence is a crime. It is against the law for anyone to physically harm or harass another person. In Oregon, the law says police shall arrest a person who they have reason to believe has abused another person.

FACT: Domestic violence may lead to murder. Three-quarters of all women who are murdered are murdered by their husbands, ex-husbands or domestic partners. In our community, nine women and children were murdered between 1999 and February of 2003.

FACT: Domestic violence costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$3 to \$5 billion annually in job absenteeism and another \$100 million annually in medical expenses.

Domestic Violence

Warning Signs of an Abuser

Before an abuser starts physically assaulting his victim, he typically demonstrates his abusive tactics through certain behaviors. The following are five major warning signs and some common examples:

Charm

Abusers can be very charming. In the beginning, they may seem to be *Prince Charming* or a *Knight in Shining Armor*. He can be very engaging, thoughtful, considerate and charismatic. He may use that charm to gain very personal information about her. He will use that information later to his advantage.

For example; he will ask if she has ever been abused by anyone. If she says, "yes", he will act outraged that anyone could treat a woman that way. Then when he becomes abusive, he will tell her no one will believe her because she said that before and it must be her fault or two people would not have hit her.

Another example; he may find out she experimented with drugs in her past. He will then threaten that if she tells anyone about the abuse he will report her as a drug abuser and she will lose her children. The threat to take away her children is one of the most common threats abusers use to maintain power and control over their victims.

Isolation

Abusers isolate their victims geographically and socially. Geographic isolation includes moving the victim from her friends, family and support system (often hundreds of miles); moving frequently in the same area and/or relocating to a rural area.

Social isolation usually begins with wanting the woman to spend time with him and not her family, friends or co-workers. He will then slowly isolate her from any person who is a support to her. He dictates whom she can talk to; he tells her she cannot have contact with her friends or family.

Jealousy

Jealousy is a tool abusers use to control the victim. He constantly accuses her of having affairs. If she goes to the grocery store, he accuses her of having an affair with the grocery clerk. If she goes to the bank, he accuses her of having an affair with the bank teller. Abusers routinely call their victims a whore or a slut.

Emotional Abuse

The goal of emotional abuse is to destroy the victim's self-esteem. He blames her for his violence, puts her down, calls her names and makes threats against her. Over time, she no longer believes she deserves to be treated with respect and she blames herself for his violence. For some survivors of domestic violence, the emotional abuse may be more difficult to heal from than the physical abuse.

Control

Abusers are very controlled and very controlling people. In time, the abuser will control every aspect of the victim's life: where she goes, how she wears her hair, what clothes she wears, whom she talks to. He will control the money and access to money. Abusers are also very controlled people. While they appear to go into a rage or be out of control we know they are very much in control of their behavior.

The following are the reasons we know his behaviors are not about anger and rage:

He does not batter other individuals - the boss who does not give him time off or the gas station attendant that spills gas down the side of his car. He waits until there are no witnesses and abuses the person he says he loves.

If you ask an abused woman, "can he stop when the phone rings or the police come to the door?" She will say "yes". Most often when the police show up, he is looking calm, cool and collected and she is the one who may look hysterical. If he were truly "out of control" he would not be able to stop himself when it is to his advantage to do so.

The abuser very often escalates from pushing and shoving to hitting in places where the bruises and marks will not show. If he were "out of control" or "in a rage" he would not be able to direct or limit where his kicks or punches land.

Domestic Violence

In the Mind of the Abuser

Abusive people typically think they are unique, really so different from other people that they don't have to follow the same rules everyone else does. But rather than being unique, abusers have a lot in common with one another, including their patterns of thinking and behaving. The following are some of their characteristics.

Excuse Making

Instead of accepting responsibility for his actions, the abuser tries to justify his behavior with excuses. For example: "My parents never loved me" or "My parents beat me" or "I had a bad day, and when I walked in and saw this mess, I lost my temper" or "I couldn't let her talk to me that way. There was nothing else I could do."

Blaming

The abuser shifts responsibility for his actions away from himself and onto others, a shift that allows him to justify his abuse because the other person supposedly "caused" his behavior. For example: "If you would stay out of it while I am disciplining the kids, I could do it without hitting them." Or he may say, "She pushes my buttons." Statements like this are victim blaming. If he really had buttons she could push, she would push the one that says, "vacuum" instead the one that says, "hit me".

Redefining

In a variation on the tactic of blaming, the abuser redefines the situation so that the problem is not with him but with others or with the outside world in general. For example, the abuser doesn't come home for dinner at 6 pm as he said he would; he comes home at 4 a.m. He says, "You're an awful cook anyway. Why should I come home to eat that stuff? I bet the kids wouldn't even eat it."

Success Fantasies

The abuser believes he would be rich, famous, or extremely successful if only other people weren't "holding me back." He uses this belief to justify his abuse. The abuser also puts other people down verbally as a way of making himself look superior.

Lying

The abuser controls the situation by lying to control the information available. The abuser also may use lying to keep other people, including his victim, off-balance psychologically. For example, he tries to appear truthful when he's lying, he tries to look deceitful even when he's telling the truth, and sometimes he reveals himself in an obvious lie.

Assuming

Abusive people often assume they know what others are thinking or feeling. Their assumption allows them to justify their behavior because they "know" what the other person would think or do in a given situation. For example, "I knew you'd be mad because I went out for a beer after work, so I figured I might as well stay out and enjoy myself."

Above the Rules

As mentioned earlier, an abuser generally believes he is better than other people and so does not have to follow the rules that ordinary people do. That attitude is typical of convicted criminals, too. Each inmate in a jail typically believes that while all the other inmates are criminals, he himself is not. An abuser shows "above-the-rules" thinking when he says, for example, "I don't need batterer intervention. I'm different than those other men. Nobody has the right to question what I do in my family."

Making Fools of Others

The abuser combines tactics to manipulate others. The tactics include lying, upsetting the other person just to watch his or her reactions, and encouraging a fight between or among others. Or, he may try to charm the person he wants to manipulate, pretending a lot of interest or concern for that person in order to get on her or his good side.

continued

Domestic Violence

In the Mind of the Abuser

continued

Fragmentation

The abuser usually keeps his abusive behavior separate from the rest of his life. The separation is physical; for example, he will beat up family members but not people outside his home. The separation is psychological; for example, the abuser attends church Sunday morning and beats his wife Sunday night. He sees no inconsistency in his behavior and feels justified in it.

Minimizing

The abuser ducks responsibility for his actions by trying to make them seem less important than they are. For example, "I didn't hit you that hard" or "I only hit one of the kids. I could have hit them all."

Vagueness

Thinking and speaking vaguely lets the abuser avoid responsibility. For example, "I'm late because I had some things to do on the way home."

Anger

Abusive people are not actually angrier than other people. However, they deliberately appear to be angry in order to control situations and people.

Power Plays

The abuser uses various tactics to power trip others. For instance, he walks out of the room when the victim is talking, or out-shouts the victim, or organizes other family members or associates to "gang up" on the victim in shunning or criticizing her.

Playing Victim

Occasionally the abuser will pretend to be helpless or will act persecuted in order to manipulate others into helping him. Here, the abuser thinks that if he doesn't get what he wants, he is the victim; and he uses the disguise of victim to get back at or make fools of others. Abusers will often claim to be the victim in order to avoid being held accountable by law enforcement. He may assert she was the one who was violent. He will display what are clearly defensive wounds, such as bite marks or scratch marks, and claim she "attacked" him. Or he will declare that the physical marks on her were caused when he was trying to keep her from hurting herself.

Drama and Excitement

Abusive people often make the choice not to have close relationships with other people. They substitute drama and excitement for closeness. Abusive people find it exciting to watch others get angry, get into fights, or be in a state of general uproar. Often, they'll use a combination of tactics described earlier to set up a dramatic and exciting situation.

Closed Channel

The abusive person does not tell much about himself and his real feelings. He is not open to new information about himself, either, such as insights into how others see him. He is secretive, close-minded, and self-righteous. He believes he is right in all situations.

Ownership

The abuser typically is very possessive. Moreover, he believes that anything he wants should be his, and he can do as he pleases with anything that is his. That attitude applies to people as well as to possessions. It justifies his controlling behavior, physically hurting others, and taking things that belong to them.

Self-glorification

The abuser usually thinks of himself as strong, superior, independent, self-sufficient, and very masculine. His picture of the ideal man often is the cowboy or adventurer type. When anyone says or does anything that doesn't fit his glorified self-image, the abuser takes it as an insult.

Domestic Violence

Patterns of Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse always accompanies, and in most cases precedes, physical battering. Targeted, repeated emotional abuse can severely affect the victim's sense of self and of reality. Here is a list of emotionally abusive behaviors abusers use against their partners:

- ✚ Abuser makes hostile jokes about the habits and faults of women
- ✚ Ignores the victim's feelings
- ✚ Withholds approval as a form of punishment
- ✚ Yells at the victim
- ✚ Labels the victim with generally insulting terms: crazy, bitch, stupid
- ✚ Repeatedly delivers a series of insults specific to the victim and designed to inflict maximum psychological damage
- ✚ Repeatedly humiliates the victim in front of family members and others
- ✚ Isolates the victim socially, perhaps geographically as well (for example, by moving the family to a remote location)
- ✚ Blames the victim for all the abuser's troubles and failures
- ✚ Threatens physical violence and retaliation against the victim, children or other family members
- ✚ Puts down the victim's abilities as a mother, lover, worker, etc
- ✚ Demands all the victim's attention and resents the children
- ✚ Tells the victim about his sexual affairs
- ✚ Constantly accuses her of having affairs, even when she does not have the desire or freedom to have affairs
- ✚ Gives the victim the "silent treatment"
- ✚ Threatens to abuse the children and/or get custody of them
- ✚ Tells the victim she must stay with him because she needs him and she couldn't make it without him
- ✚ Accuses the victim of being violent if she acts in any way to protect herself
- ✚ Questions her sense of reality
- ✚ Forces economic dependency: He prevents the victim from working - either by forbidding her to get a job or by making her life so chaotic that she gets fired - and/or he takes her money
- ✚ Puts down or denies the victim's history, heritage, faith, values
- ✚ Hits the wall, not her, to display his power
- ✚ Breaks personal items that have sentimental value to her as a message that he can break her too
- ✚ Threatens, tortures or kills her/their pets
- ✚ Threatens suicide if the victim doesn't stay with him or do what he wants
- ✚ Spends hours cleaning guns or knives in front of the victim
- ✚ Threatens to kill her or her children
- ✚ Destroys victim's self esteem

Domestic Violence

Patterns of Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may begin in a physically nonviolent way; that is, with neglect, which can include not allowing her access to basic needs (food, shelter, hygiene items); not allowing her to sleep; or withholding physical intimacy as a way to control her. When the abuse moves into overt violence, he may begin with assaults such as painful pinching or squeezing. As the abuser escalates, he becomes more violent and his violence becomes targeted; that is, directed to a part of the body, such as the torso, where the injuries are less likely to show. When the abuser believes he will not be held accountable for his behaviors, he may inflict visible injuries. The following is a list of physically abusive behaviors:

- ✎ Pinching and/or squeezing in a painful way
- ✎ Pushing, shoving or restraining
- ✎ Jerking, pulling, shaking or hair pulling
- ✎ Slapping or biting
- ✎ Targeted hitting, kicking, etc. so that injuries do not show. The abuser's actions here are evidence that he is not "out of control" when he batters. Instead he is using violence to control and exert power over the victim.
- ✎ Strangling the victim
- ✎ Throwing objects at the victim
- ✎ Abuses the children sexually, physically, and/or emotionally
- ✎ Sustained series of hitting or kicking blows, visible injuries
- ✎ Physical abuse that requires medical treatment
- ✎ Abuser deprives the victim of sleep, food, medicine, other essentials
- ✎ Throwing the victim
- ✎ Causing broken bones and/or internal injuries
- ✎ Causing miscarriage or injuries that require a therapeutic abortion
- ✎ Using objects at hand, such as household utensils, as weapons
- ✎ Denying the victim medical treatment
- ✎ Using weapons such as a gun or knife
- ✎ Causing permanently disabling and/or disfiguring injuries
- ✎ Murder

Domestic Violence

Patterns of Sexual Abuse

Abusers often use sexual assaults and/or harassment as a tool against their partner. It can be difficult for victims and survivors of sexual assault to discuss this form of abuse. Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service encourages survivors and their supporters to become aware of the patterns of sexual abuse. The following is a list of sexually abusive behaviors:

- ✚ Abuser jokes about women and sex in the presence of the victim
- ✚ Looks on women as sex objects
- ✚ Pretends to be extremely jealous
- ✚ Minimizes the victim's feelings and needs regarding sex
- ✚ Criticizes the victim in sexual terms
- ✚ Touches the victim against the victim's wishes (molestation)
- ✚ Withholds sex and affection
- ✚ Attaches sexual labels to the victim: "slut", "whore", "frigid"
- ✚ Always demands sex
- ✚ Forces the victim to undress as a form of humiliation (this may be in front of the children in the home)
- ✚ Abuser is promiscuous with others
- ✚ Forces the victim to witness his sexual acts with others
- ✚ Uses threats to back up his demands for sex
- ✚ Forces the victim to have sex with him or others
- ✚ Forces sex after beating the victim
- ✚ Abuser uses objects and/or weapons in sexual acts
- ✚ Sadism, mutilation
- ✚ Murder

Domestic Violence

Social Supports for Abuse

Society in general holds certain attitudes about women and their proper roles. Some of these attitudes and stereotypes work in favor of abusers and against the women who are their victims. The following list describes some of the negative social attitudes and practices, as well as the abuser's actions that are supported by the stereotypes about women:

Negative Social Attitudes

- ✦ Rigid stereotypes and roles for men and women
- ✦ Women trained, by custom and sometimes by law, to be dependent on men
- ✦ The Cinderella-and-Prince-Charming myth
- ✦ Barriers to women in employment, government, leadership
- ✦ The view that men ought to control money, jobs, all the family's major decisions
- ✦ The family as an institution discourages any member from leaving or divorce
- ✦ Police, doctors, schools, other institutions in society don't always respond quickly to clues of abuse
- ✦ Crime, poverty, and other factors make women fearful of living alone
- ✦ Tendency to over prescribe drugs for women who are abused
- ✦ The view that a woman's role is to take care of the family, and therefore any family troubles are the fault of the woman and are her responsibility to "fix"
- ✦ Family, friends tell the victim to try harder to be a better wife or partner
- ✦ Faith community expectations that a wife keep her marriage vows "for better or for worse"
- ✦ The view that children always suffer from divorce and keeping the family together is imperative

Things Men Can Do

Things Men Can Do To End Men's Violence Against Women

- ✦ Approach gender violence as a man's issue, involving men of all socioeconomic and racial backgrounds. View men not only as perpetrators or potential offenders, but as empowered bystanders who can confront abusive peers.
- ✦ If a brother, a friend, a classmate or a teammate is abusing his female partner- or is abusive to females in general- don't look the other way.
- ✦ Have the courage to look inward. Understand how your own attitudes and actions may perpetuate sexism and violence, and work to change them.
- ✦ If you suspect that a woman close to you is being abused or has been sexually assaulted, gently ask if you can help.
- ✦ Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence.
- ✦ Recognize and speak out against homophobia and gay bashing. Discrimination against lesbians and gays is wrong. This abuse also has direct links to sexism. Men who speak out against sexism are often subject to homophobia which is one reason so few men do so.
- ✦ Attend programs, take courses and read about masculinity, gender inequality and the root causes of gender violence. Educate yourself and others about how larger social forces affect the conflicts between individual men and women.
- ✦ Don't fund sexism. Refuse to purchase any magazine, see any movie or buy any music that portrays women in a sexually degrading or violent manner. Protest sexism in the media.
- ✦ Mentor and teach young boys about how to be men in ways that don't involve degrading or abusing girls and women. Lead by example.

Adapted from Jackson Katz

Domestic Violence

A Comparison of the Cycles of Violence

Victims of domestic violence often suffer not only from the effects of physical or verbal abuse from their partners but also from "well meaning" individuals who make statements that can be hurtful. Without realizing what they are saying, friends, relatives or acquaintances may actually end up blaming the victim for the abuse. Any statement that takes the focus off of the abuser and places it on the victim is very damaging. Examples of this are: "Why doesn't she just leave?" or "What did she do to make him mad?"

Another example of victim blaming is embedded within the well-publicized Tension Building Explosion Model of the Cycle of Violence developed by Lenore Walker in 1979. This theory does not provide an accurate understanding of what may precede a "domestic violence occurrence" and what a family may experience in the aftermath of the abuse.

The following is an explanation of the Tension Building Explosion Model and what the Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service refers to as *The Cycle of Violence*.

Tension Building/Explosion Model

In 1979, Lenore Walker, author of *The Battered Woman*, developed the Tension Building/Explosion Model of the Cycle of Violence. Walker based her cycle on research conducted on 120 battered women. The Tension Building/Explosion cycle has been used since that time in countless books and articles to indicate what is happening in the lives of abused women. The Tension Building/Explosion Model involves three stages:

- **Tension Building Phase**
During the tension building phase the abuser becomes more temperamental and critical of the victim. As the tension escalates, the victim feels as if she is "walking on eggshells." The victim may try to placate the abuser to prevent the abuse.
- **Acute Explosive Phase**
The abuser verbally or physically attacks the victim. This is much more intense than during the tension building phase and may increase in intensity with each explosive phase.
- **The Honeymoon Phase**
The batterer expresses remorse over his behavior and promises to change. The batterer is charming and may offer gifts such as flowers, jewelry, perfume and candy.

Concern about Impact of Tension Building/Explosion Model

By 1983, women working in the Anti-violence Movement in Salem, Oregon realized the Tension Building /Explosion model was flawed. Abusers do not harm their intimate partners because of tension and stress. As humans, each of us feels stress and tension in our lives and yet, we do not make the choice to abuse someone else. If it were a matter of tension the abusive person would be unable to control his behavior and would batter whoever was causing the stress (i.e., the boss who yells at him or police officers who pull him over, etc.) Also abusers would not be able to control where their punches landed. Many abusers "target punch" their partners - specifically targeting areas where the bruises and marks are less likely to be seen - the neck, back, upper torso and legs.

The Tension Building/Explosion Model may also be used to blame the victim for the abuse. If she would just keep the children quieter or keep the house clean there would be less stress in the household. It becomes the victim's responsibility to keep the abuse from happening. Due to our socialization process, it is common for women in our society to feel responsible for making a relationship "work" and the Tension Building/Explosion Model of the Cycle of Violence only feeds into those stereotypes.

Since 1983, advocates for women who are abused have found the cycle presented in the next topic to be a more accurate representation of what occurs when someone chooses to be violent.

Domestic Violence

The Cycle of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence may seem unpredictable, simply an outburst related just to the moment and to the circumstances in the lives of the people involved. In fact, however, domestic violence follows a typical pattern no matter when it occurs or who is involved. The pattern, or cycle, repeats; each time the level of his violence may increase. At every stage in the cycle, the abuser is fully in control of himself and is working to control and further isolate his victim.

Understanding the cycle of violence and the thinking of the abuser helps survivors recognize they truly are not to blame for the violence they have suffered and that the abuser is the one responsible.

Six distinct stages make up the cycle of violence: the set-up, the abuse, the abuser's feelings of "guilt" and his fear of reprisal, his rationalization, his shift to non-abusive and charming behavior, and his fantasies and plans for the next time he will abuse.

Abuse

Abuse can be emotional, physical, sexual, psychological, economic, and social (please refer to the Patterns of Abuse).

Guilt

A non-abusive person experiences guilt very differently than an abusive person. A non-abusive person feels guilty about how they have impacted the life of the person they harmed (victim-directed guilt). An abuser experiences self-directed guilt. He does not feel guilty or sorry for hurting his victim. He may apologize for his behavior, but his apology is designed so that he will not face consequences or be held accountable. The goal of the guilt stage is to reassure himself that he will not be caught or face consequences.

Rationalization

The abuser makes excuses and blames the victim for his behavior. Common excuses usually revolve around the abuser being intoxicated or abused as a child. However, alcohol use and being abused as a child does not cause the abuser to be violent. Common victim blaming statements usually focus on the victim's behavior. For example, "If you had the house cleaned, I wouldn't have had to hit you," or, "If you had cooked dinner on time, I wouldn't have had to hit you." The goal of this stage is to abdicate responsibility for his behavior.

"Normal" Behavior

During this stage, the abuser may use different tactics to achieve his goal to regain power over the victim. The abuser may act as though nothing happened - everything is *normal*. This can be crazy making for victims, as they do not understand how he could pretend nothing happened.

If the victim has visible injuries, she will have to explain how she got them. This is designed to maintain the *normalcy* of the relationship. The goal of this stage is to keep the victim in the relationship and present the relationship as normal.

Another tactic an abuser may use after he has chosen to be violent is to become the thoughtful, charming, loyal, and kind person with whom the victim fell in love. He may take her out to dinner, buy her flowers and convince her he will change. This can be a huge incentive for women to stay or return to the abuser because they believe that this time he really will change. (See the section, [Is He Really Going to Change?](#) for more information)

Fantasy and Planning

Abuse is planned. In the initial stages, an abuser fantasizes or has a mental picture of the next time he will abuse the victim. During the fantasy and planning stage, the abuser is the actor, producer, director and the star.

The abuser experiences his power from activating the fantasy. The planning phase details more specifically what the abuser will need to have and to do in order to abuse his partner.

Abusers may spend minutes, hours or days fantasizing about what the victim has done "wrong" and how he is going to make her "pay". Most often he will fantasize she is having an affair. Most abused women do not have the time, energy, or interest in having an affair. However, it is the most common accusation, because she can never prove she is not having an affair.

Set-up

This is when the abuser puts his plan into action. He sets the victim up.

Domestic Violence

The Cycle of Domestic Violence

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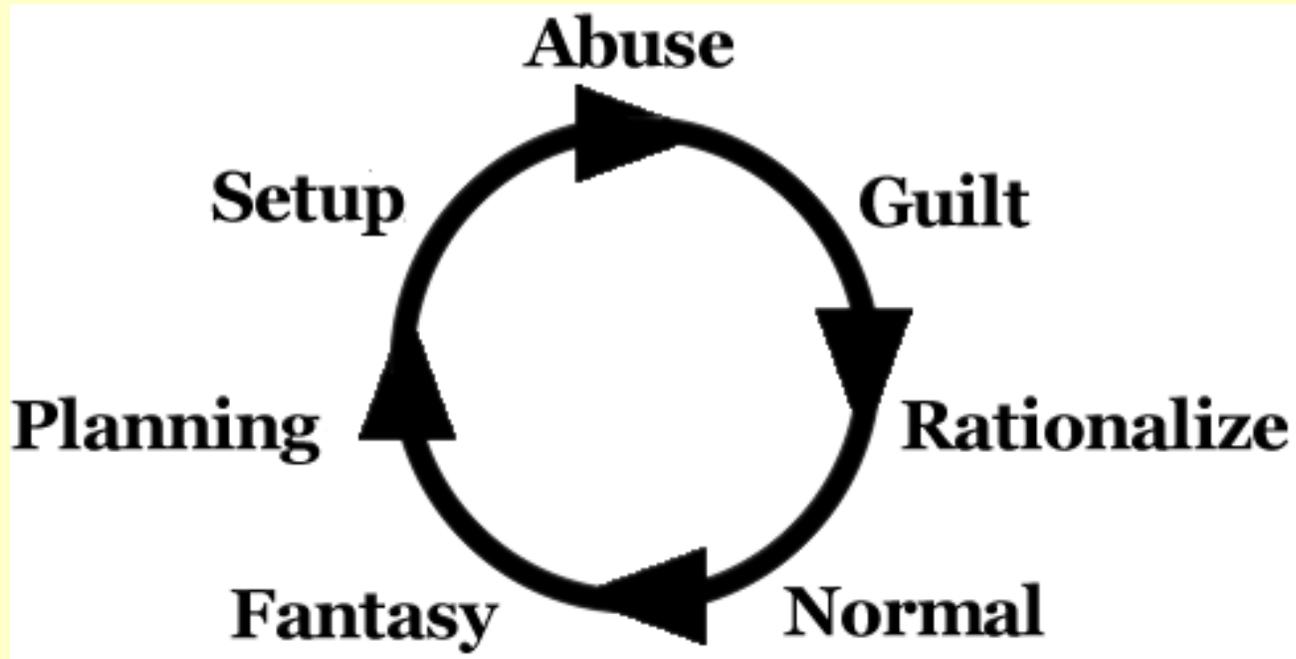
The Full Cycle

Here is an example of the cycle of violence through all its phases.

A man **abuses** his partner. After he hits her, he experiences self-directed **guilt**. He says, "I'm sorry for hurting you." What he does not say is, "Because I might get caught."

He then **rationalizes** his behavior by saying that his partner is having an affair with someone. He tells her "If you weren't such a worthless whore I wouldn't have to hit you." He then acts **contrite**, reassuring her that he will not hurt her again.

He then **fantasizes** and reflects on past abuse and how he will hurt her again. He **plans** on telling her to go to the store to get some groceries. What he withholds from her is that she has a certain amount of time to do the shopping. When she is held up in traffic and is a few minutes late, he feels completely justified in assaulting her because "you're having an affair with the store clerk." He has just **set her up**.



Domestic Violence

How Survivors Cope

Women and children who survive domestic violence have talked about the various ways they have developed to cope until they could find safety. The coping strategies they worked out enabled them to survive. Some of the coping strategies are:

Denial

The survivor tells herself, in effect, that the abuse is not really happening or may deny the impact the abuse has had on her. A survivor in denial will say, "This bruise? Oh, it's nothing" or "He doesn't really hurt me." Denial helps the survivor avoid feelings of terror and humiliation.

Minimization

This is a form of denial. The survivor minimizes when she says, "This isn't really abuse. Abuse is more serious" or "Well, he only hit me once with his fist."

Nightmares

These help the survivor experience some strong feelings such as fear, anger, panic, and shame which she cannot safely share with anyone at the time.

Shock and Dissociation

These two reactions can numb the survivor's mind and body while the assault takes place and for a time afterward. The reactions help her avoid dealing with immediate feelings until she has found safety.

Where To Turn For Support

Even after the survivor finds safety and supportive people, she may continue to use these coping strategies until she realizes they are no longer necessary or helpful. At that point, the survivor may be interested in receiving counseling or other supportive services.

Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service offers support groups for women who are or have been abused. Support group may be a good first step to begin the healing process. Also, several private counselors and counseling agencies in our community have staff trained to help survivors of abuse.

Other types of advocacy, referral, information, and support will be helpful for survivors with financial, medical, social service, or legal needs.

Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service believes survivors must make their own decisions about whether to use counseling, support groups, and other services available.

Domestic Violence

Co-Dependent or Abused

For years victims of domestic violence have been labeled co-dependent. The following is a set of characteristics of a *co-dependent* as offered by Co-Dependents Anonymous, compared with the reality of a woman who is abused.

CO-DEPENDENT: I take responsibility for others' feelings and/or behaviors.

ABUSED: I am held responsible for my abuser's feelings and/or behaviors.

CO-DEPENDENT: I feel overly responsible for others' feelings and/or behaviors.

ABUSED: For my safety, I must be aware of my abuser's feelings and/or behaviors.

CO-DEPENDENT: I have difficulty expressing my feelings.

ABUSED: If I express my feelings, I jeopardize my safety.

CO-DEPENDENT: I have difficulty in forming and/or maintaining close relationships.

ABUSED: It is dangerous for me to form or maintain close relationships.

CO-DEPENDENT: I am afraid of being hurt or rejected.

ABUSED: Having been hurt and rejected, I am scared of re-victimization.

CO-DEPENDENT: I tend to harshly judge everything I do, think, or say, by someone else's standards. Nothing is done, said or thought "good enough."

ABUSED: My abuser harshly judges everything I do, think, or say. Nothing I do is "good enough."

CO-DEPENDENT: I question or ignore my own values to connect with significant others. I value others' opinions more than my own.

ABUSED: My values and opinions are questioned/ignored by my abuser. For my safety I do not express my own opinions.

CO-DEPENDENT: My self-esteem is bolstered by outer/other influences.

ABUSED: My self-esteem is systematically destroyed by my abuser's tactics.

Domestic Violence

The Separation Cycle

When a woman leaves her abuser, the abuser goes through a process of emotions and behaviors that is quite predictable. This is the separation process:

Indifference

At first, the abuser says such things as, "Go ahead and leave. I don't care. I've got lots of women after me. I don't need you."

Manipulative "Anger"

Now the abuser shows his "anger". Abusers are no more angry than anyone else. Anger is a tool abusers use to gain and maintain control. If there are children in the family, for instance, he may claim his outrage is because the survivor is keeping the children from him and "I demand the right to see my kids!"

Manipulative Courting

The abuser tries to hook the victim back into the relationship - and succeeds in more than a few cases. The abuser begins to court the survivor again, perhaps with a trip down memory lane: "Remember when we met?" "Remember when the baby was born?" He also promises to change: "I'll quit drinking." "I'll get counseling." He won't discuss his choice to use abuse; he will talk only about past good times and the promise of good times to come. He says he wants her back.

Defaming the Survivor

He tells lies about the survivor to everyone who knows her. His goal is to isolate her socially and to wipe out any support she might have among friends and family. Many times, the woman does not know about the lies. One of the most common lies is that the woman was having an affair, a lie that he can use to justify his violent behavior.

Renewed Manipulative "Anger"

Once he recognizes the survivor is not coming back to him, he renews his manipulative "anger". *The victim may be in danger.* The abuser is more likely to carry out threats he made during the relationship and earlier in the separation cycle.

What you can do

If any of this applies to you, see [Plan For Safety, Identify Support and Survival Needs](#) for more information on how to keep yourself and your children as safe as possible.

Domestic Violence

Is He Really Going to Change This Time?

A Guide for Women Whose Partners are in a Batterer Intervention Program

If your partner has entered an intervention program for batterers, you're probably hopeful that he will change. It's important to know that there are no miracle cures for his violence - he is the only one who can make the decision to change. This section will give you information about what is an appropriate program, what signs to watch for in your partner, and what to do if you think you may still be in danger of being abused.

How Do You Know If The Program Will Work?

There are no guarantees that any program will work; everything depends on your partner's motivation and willingness to change. Some programs are more appropriate than others. Those programs use the following standards:

Safety is the first priority.

Programs should always assess your safety when communicating with you. A program should never disclose information that you have given them without your permission. A program should not misrepresent its ability to change his behavior. A program's definition of success is the quality of your and your children's lives, starting with safety.

Lasts long enough.

Change takes time. The longer the program, the more opportunities he will have to make the choice to change. A year or more in a program is preferable, although that is not always possible.

Holds him accountable.

The first step of accountability is that he takes responsibility for choosing to use violence to maintain power and control over you. A program should recognize that his behavior is the "problem" and not allow him to use your behavior as an excuse. Programs should hold him accountable for attendance, participation, and complying with the group's rules. (You can get a copy of the rules by calling the program.)

The curriculum gets to the root of his belief system.

The content of the program is set up to challenge his underlying belief system that he has the right to control, dominate, and abuse you. Programs that address anger, communication skills, and/or stress do not get to the root of his belief system.

Makes no demands on you to participate.

You're not the one making the choice to be violent, so the program should not require that you be involved in any way. Don't let anyone lead you to believe that his progress is dependent upon your participation.

Is open to your input.

If you initiate contact with the program to ask questions or give input you think may be useful, a program should welcome your participation. This is different from requiring you to participate. Sometimes, a program may initiate contact with you to discuss your partner's behavior outside the program. You should not feel obligated to share information, especially if you feel it might create a risk of further violence against you.

Domestic Violence

Is He Really Going to Change This Time?

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How Do You Know If He's Really Changing?

Positive signs include:

- He has stopped being violent or threatening to you or others.
- He acknowledges that his abusive behavior is wrong.
- He understands that he does not have the right to control and dominate you.
- You don't feel afraid when you are with him.
- He does not coerce you into having sex when you don't want to.
- You can express anger toward him without feeling intimidated.
- He does not make you feel responsible for his abusive behavior.
- He respects your opinion, even if he doesn't agree with it.
- He respects your right to say "no".
- You can negotiate without being humiliated and belittled by him.
- You don't have to ask his permission to go out, go to school, get a job, or take other independent actions.
- He listens to you and respects what you have to say.
- He communicates honestly and does not try to manipulate you.
- He recognizes that he is not "cured" and that changing his behavior, attitudes, and beliefs is a lifelong process.
- He no longer does _____ (fill in the blank with any behavior that use to precede his violence, manipulation, or emotional abuse).
- He no longer isolates you from your family or friends.
- He does not blame you for his behavior.
- He no longer emotionally abuses you.
- He no longer calls you names.

What Do They Do In Batterer Intervention, Anyway?

Changing Attitudes, Beliefs, and Behaviors

Abusers have beliefs and attitudes that support their choice to use violence, such as: men are superior, women are possessions of men, and violence is an acceptable way to get what they want. The program should be reinforcing an egalitarian belief system and that violent behavior is a choice and the batterer's responsibility. Batterers must be confronted about their use of all types of abusive behaviors (i.e., emotional and verbal assaults, abusing pets, destroying property, withholding money or access to money; stalking, and other behaviors) that can terrify or intimidate victims and their families. Batterers need to learn that there is no excuse for any abusive behavior – and that it is never the victim's fault.

Achieving Equality in Relationships

The program should help batterers come up with long-term strategies for achieving the mutual respect, trust, and support that is necessary to maintain a relationship free of abuse. It should also help them develop long-term plans for sharing responsibility with their partners in areas such as family finances and parenting.

Community Participation

It is important that the program help the batterer understand that he has committed a crime against the community. He can acknowledge his violence by discussing his efforts to change with friends or co-workers, referring other men who are abusive to the program, and making sincere amends for past offenses (such as replacing destroyed or stolen property).

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Domestic Violence

Is He Really Going to Change This Time?

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Warning Signs:

Venting Is Not OK

Techniques and therapies like pillow-punching or primal-screaming are NOT appropriate for abusers. They tend to reinforce, rather than discourage, violent behavior. These techniques should not be a part of any intervention program.

A Call from the Program

A batterer intervention program should alert you if it is clear from your partner's behavior in the program that you are in danger. While most programs have confidentiality policies that prevent them from telling you specifically what he has discussed in group meetings, they are obligated to warn you if they believe any immediate danger exists. If you get a call from them about this, take it seriously.

Couples Counseling Won't Stop His Violence

Your partner may try to get you to go to couples counseling, telling you that you both have a problem and should work on it together. Couples counseling is never appropriate when one partner is choosing to use violence against the other. You do not have a "relationship" problem that needs to be addressed – he is using violence and coercion to get what he wants. Couples counseling can only work when both partners feel free to express their issues, concerns and desires freely. If one partner exerts power and control over the other, there is no basis for counseling that is free from fear and intimidation.

Manipulation

Your partner's abusive behavior is rooted in a desire to control you, and that pattern isn't going to change overnight. He may no longer be violent, but he may still try to exert control by manipulating you into doing what he wants. Here are some common manipulative behaviors:

- ✦ Tries to invoke sympathy from you or family and friends
- ✦ Is overly charming; reminds you of all the good times you've had together
- ✦ Tries to buy you back with romantic gifts, dinners, flowers, etc.
- ✦ Tries to seduce you when you're vulnerable
- ✦ Uses veiled threats - to take the kids away, to quit attending the program, to cut off financial support
- ✦ His promises to change don't match his behavior

You may be so hopeful for change that you want to believe him, even if things don't feel any different. But trust your instincts. If you don't feel safe, then chances are you're not.

The Six Big Lies

If you hear your partner making statements like these while he is in a program, you need to understand that he is lying to you.

1. ***"I'm not the only one with a problem, you have a problem too."***
2. ***"I'm not as bad as a lot of the other guys in there."***
3. ***"As soon as I'm done with this program, I'll be cured."***
4. ***"We need to stay together to work this out."***
5. ***"If I weren't under so much stress, I wouldn't have such a short fuse."***
6. ***"Now that I'm in this program, you have to be more understanding."***

These statements have one thing in common: they let him off the hook for his choice to use abusive behavior. Remember, he needs to be willing to accept responsibility for his violence in order to change.

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Domestic Violence

Is He Really Going to Change This Time?

continued

How Do You Know You're Safe?

If you feel that you will be safer away from your partner while he is in an intervention program, you have every right to leave. Even if you leave, you must understand that his participation in the program is no guarantee that he will not be a threat to you. The risk that he may be violent toward you may even increase when you leave. For your own safety and the safety of your children, watch for these warning signs in the way he behaves toward you while he is in the program.

Tries to find you if you've left. He may try to get information from your family and friends about your whereabouts, either by threatening them or trying to get their sympathy.

Tries to get you to come back to him. He may do anything to get you to come back - if promising to change and being charming or contrite don't work, his efforts could then escalate to threats and violence.

Tries to take away the children. He may try to kidnap the children as a way of forcing you to stay with him.

Stalks you. If you always seem to run into him when you are on your way to work, running errands, or out with your friends, or if you receive lots of mysterious phone calls, he could be stalking you.

Steps You Can Take To Help Keep Yourself Safe

If you have any reason to believe you may be at risk for abuse while your partner is in a program, there are several things you can do to try to increase your safety:

- Contact Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service for assistance.
- Contact a legal advocate if you feel you need help in dealing with threats to take your children; Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service can provide referrals.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, contact the program he is in to let them know about any threatening or potentially threatening behavior.
- If you have left him, tell as few family members and friends as possible where you are. If they don't know how to find you, they can't be frightened or manipulated into telling him.

Material used with permission. Adapted from work by the Texas Council on Family Violence, Austin, Texas .