**Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence- also known as intimate partner violence- occurs between people who are or have been in a close relationship. Domestic violence can present itself in many forms including: emotional, sexual, physical and stalking and threats of abuse. It occurs in heterosexual or same-sex relationships. Abusive relationships always involve an imbalance of power. The abuser uses intimidation, hurtful words and behaviors to control his or her partner. Initially, the abuse may appear as isolated incidents where the abuser may apologize and promise not to abuse again.

* On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men.
* 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner contact sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking with impacts such as injury, fearfulness, post-traumatic stress disorder, use of victim services, contraction of sexually transmitted diseases, etc.
  + 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner.This includes a range of behaviors (e.g., slapping, shoving, pushing) and in some cases might not be considered "domestic violence."
  + 1 in 7 women and 1 in 25 men have been injured by an intimate partner.
  + 1 in 10 women have been raped by an intimate partner. Data is unavailable on male victims.
* 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have been victims of severe physical violence (e.g. beating, burning, strangling) by an intimate partner in their lifetime.[**1**](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf)
* 1 in 7 women and 1 in 18 men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime to the point in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed.
* On a typical day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide.
* The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500%.
* Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime.
* Women between the ages of 18-24 are most commonly abused by an intimate partner.
* 19% of domestic violence involves a weapon.
* Domestic victimization is correlated with a higher rate of depression and suicidal behavior.
* Only 34% of people who are injured by intimate partners receive medical care for their injuries.

**Signs of possible abuse:**

* Name calling, insults or put downs
* Tries to prevent partner from going to work or school
* Stops partner from seeing family members or friends
* Tries to control how the partner spends money
* Tries to control what clothing the partner wears
* Acts jealous or possessive or accuses the partner of being unfaithful
* Tries to control whether the partner can see health care providers
* Threatens with violence or weapons
* Can engage in hitting, kicking, shoving, slapping, choking or otherwise hurts the partner, children or pets
* Forces the partner to have sex or engage in sexual acts against the partner’s will
* Blames the partner for his or her violent behaviors or tells the partner that they deserve it.
* Threatens to tell family, friends, colleagues or community members the partner’s sexual orientation or gender identity

Gay, bisexual, or transgender people may also be experiencing domestic violence if their partner engages in the following:

* Tells the partner that the authorities will not help gay, bisexual or transgender people
* Tells the partner that by leaving the relationship they are admitting that gay, bisexual or transgender relationships are deviant
* Justifies abuse by telling the partner that they are not really gay, Bisexual or transgender
* Says that men are naturally violent

**The abused taking the blame**

The partner being abused may at times be confused and take the blame for the abuse. It is common for the partner being abused to defend themselves verbally or physically. The abuser may use these incidents to manipulate the partner being abused in believing that they are the abuser.

**Children and abuse**

Domestic violence affects children, even if no one is directly abusing them. Being exposed to domestic violence makes children more likely to have developmental problems, psychiatric disorders, problems at school, aggressive behavior and low self-esteem. The partner being abused may worry that seeking help for the children could endanger breaking up the family, or that the children would be taken away by authorities. However, seeking help is the best way to protect the children and the partner being abused.

**Breaking the cycle of abuse**

There is often a cycle of abuse that may include:

* The abuser threatens violence
* The abuser strikes
* The abuser apologizes, promises to change and offers gifts
* The cycle repeats itself

Typically, the violence becomes more frequent and severe over time.

Domestic violence can lead to depression and anxiety, and an increase risk of drug or alcohol problems. Men that are being abused are less likely to report domestic violence in heterosexual relationships because they are usually physically stronger and may feel embarrassed or feel that the report will not be taken seriously. Similarly, a man being abused by another man may be reluctant to report the problem because it reflects on his masculinity or it exposes his sexual orientation.

It is important that the partner being abused start by telling someone about the abuse, whether it is a friend, relative, health care provider or other close contact. It is often very difficult to begin talking about the abuse, however there is also a feeling of relief and hope of receiving much-needed support.

**Creating a safety plan**

Leaving an abuser can be dangerous. Below are precautions to consider:

* Call a domestic violence hotline for advice. Make the call at a safe time-when the abuser is not around- or from a friend’s house or other safe location.
* Pack an emergency bag that includes items that will be needed when the partner being abused leaves such as extra clothes and keys. Leave the bag in a safe place. Keep important papers, medication and money handy so that they can be taken in short notice.
* The partner being abused should know exactly where they will go and how to get there.

**Protect your communication and location**

The abuser may attempt to monitor telephone and online communication and track the physical location of the partner that has left. To maintain privacy use phones cautiously. The abuser may intercept calls and listen to conversations. He or she may use caller ID, check the partner’s cell phone or search phone bill records to obtain the complete call and texting history. The abuser may attempt to monitor emails and the websites visited. The partner should consider using a computer outside the home to seek help.

**Where to seek help**

* Call 911 for immediate help
* Contact a trusted friend, relative, neighbor, coworker, or religious or spiritual advisor for support.
* [National Domestic Violence Hotlineexternal icon](http://www.thehotline.org/)  
  Call **1-800-799-7233**and TTY**1-800-787-3224.**
* [Love is Respect National Teen Dating Abuse Helplineexternal icon](https://www.loveisrespect.org/)  
  Call **1-866-331-9474** or TTY **1-866-331-8453**
* [Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network’s (RAINN) National Sexual Assault Hotlineexternal icon](http://www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-hotline)  
  Call **800-656-HOPE (4673)** to be connected with a trained staff member from a sexual assault service provider in your area.
* [**StrongHearts Native Helpline**](https://strongheartshelpline.org/)  
  844-762-8483
* Contact a healthcare provider to treat injuries and for referrals to local resources.
* Seek services from a local mental health center for counseling support groups for people in abusive relationships.
* Local courts can help in obtaining a restraining order that legally mandates the abuser to stay away. Local advocates may be available for guidance through the process.

The above data sources are:

“Healthy Lifestyle Adult Health” developed by the staff at the Mayo Clinic.

U. S. Department of Justice

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (2020). Retrieved from

<https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/domestic_violence>

2020080709350855.pdf?1596811079991.

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