

Domestic Abuse and Violence



Domestic Abuse occurs when one person dominates another using physical, emotional or sexual methods. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called domestic violence.

Domestic abuse can, and does, occur in a variety of relationships. For example between:

- spouses
- co-workers
- siblings
- friends
- parent-child
- business-client

Domestic abuse can escalate from threats and verbal abuse to violence. While physical abuse may be more obvious, the emotional and psychological effects of verbal abuse are also very serious. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy a person's self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make a person feel helpless and alone.

Physical Abuse is the use of bodily force against someone in a way that injures or endangers that person. Physical assault or battering is a crime, whether it occurs inside or outside of the family.

Emotional abuse can deteriorate self-worth and independence. A victim may feel there is no way out of the relationship. Emotional abuse includes:

- yelling
- intimidation
- name-calling
- bullying
- blaming
- threatening
- shaming
- controlling behavior
- isolation

Sexual Abuse is any situation in which a person is forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe or degrading sexual activity. Forced sex, even by a spouse or intimate partner with whom the victim also has had consensual sex, is an act of aggression and violence.

Economic or Financial Abuse is another way of dominating another person by controlling access to money. Some examples of economic abuse include:

- rigidly controlling finances
- withholding money or credit cards
- withholding basic necessities (food, shelter medications, clothes)
- enforcing an allowance
- preventing the other person from working or choosing his or her own career
- sabotaging employment
- stealing the partner's money

The Cycle of Violence in Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse falls into a common pattern or cycle of violence:

Abuse – The abusive person lashes out with aggressive, belittling or violent behavior. The abuse is a power play designed to show “who is the boss.”

Guilt – After abusing the victim, the abusive person feels guilt not over what he or she has done but the possibility of being caught and facing consequences for the abusive behavior.

Domestic Abuse and Violence (Part 2)



Excuses – The abuser rationalizes his or her actions and may come up with a string of excuses or blame the victim for the abusive behavior—anything to avoid taking responsibility.

“Normal” Behavior – The abuser does everything possible to maintain control. The abusive person may act as if nothing happened, or may turn on the charm. This peaceful phase may give the victim hope that the abuser has really changed this time.

Fantasy and Planning – The abuser begins to fantasize about abusing again, spends a lot of time thinking about what the person has done wrong and plans how he or she will pay. Then the aggressor makes a plan to turn the fantasy of abuse into reality.

Set-Up – The abuser sets the partner up and puts the plan in motion, creating a situation where the abuse can be justified.

Recognizing the Warning Signs of Domestic Abuse and Violence

A victim of abuse may:

- Seem afraid or anxious to please his or her partner
- Go along with everything the partner says and does
- Check in often with the partner to report where she is and what she is doing
- Talk about the partner’s temper, jealousy or possessiveness

A victim of physical abuse may:

- Have frequent injuries, with the excuse of “accidents”
- Frequently miss work, school or social occasions without explanation, and
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g., wearing long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors)

Someone who is being isolated by the abuser may:

- Be restricted from seeing family and friends
- Rarely go out in public
- Have limited access to money, credit cards or a car

A victim of psychological abuse may:

- Have very low self-esteem, even if he or she used to be confident
- Show major personality changes (e.g. an outgoing person becomes withdrawn)
- Be depressed, anxious or suicidal

Source: http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_types_signs_causes_effects.html (Accessed 5/12/14)

If you are a victim of abuse or you suspect someone else is being abused, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) for the nearest support program. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, in English, Spanish and other languages. If you suspect a client is being abused, notify the franchise office immediately; do not confront the alleged abuser.