

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Abuse happens when one person believes that they are entitled to control another.

Domestic violence does not discriminate in any way. It appears in every race, religion, gender, and age group. An individual's mental or physical ability, political beliefs, national origin, socioeconomic status, marital status, or sexual orientation have no bearing on whether or not domestic violence enters their life.

Acts of domestic violence fall into one or more of the following categories:

Physical Battering

The abuser's aggressive behavior can range from bruising and restraining to murder.

Initial abusive behavior may seem trivial but it can and does escalate into more frequent and serious attacks.

Sexual Abuse

Physical abuse can be accompanied by, or can culminate in, sexual violence, including any forced sexual activity.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

This form of abuse can include verbal abuse, degradation, harassment, excessive possessiveness, isolation from friends and family, deprivation of physical and economic resources, and destruction of personal property.

Domestic Violence Warning Signs

The following signs often occur before actual abuse and may serve as clues to potential abuse:

- Did they grow up in a violent family?
- Do they tend to use violence to "solve" problems?
- Do they abuse alcohol or other drugs?
- Do they have strong traditional ideas about male and female roles?
- Are they jealous of your other relationships?
- Do they expect you to follow their orders?
- Do they have rapid, violent mood swings?
- Do they have access to guns, knives, or other weapons?
- When they get angry, are you afraid of them?

Abuse Checklist

Does your partner . . .

- Embarrass you or ridicule you in public?
- Use intimidation or threats to get their way?
- Tell you that you are nothing without them?
- Treat you roughly—grab, pinch, shove, or hit you?
- Blame you for how they feel or act?
- Pressure you sexually?
- Prevent you from doing things you want?
- Try to keep you from leaving after a fight, or leave you somewhere to "teach you a lesson"?

Do you . . .

- Feel scared of how your partner will react?
- Make excuses for your partner's behavior?
- Try not to do anything that will cause conflict?
- Always do what your partner wants you to do?
- Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you left?

If any of these things are happening in your relationship you may be experiencing abuse.

Children and Domestic Violence

Children, regardless of whether they have experienced abuse directly, are affected by violence in the home. Children who witness abuse display the same emotional responses as children who have been physically and emotionally abused. Living in an abusive home can even affect infants negatively.

Children who grow up in homes where violence is present are:

- 6 times more likely to commit suicide
- 24 times more likely to be sexually assaulted
- 67 times more likely to engage in delinquent behavior as an adolescent
- 100 times more likely to be abusers themselves
- 1500 times more likely to be abused or neglected

U. S. Dept. of Justice: Special Report, 2002

- ♦ Studies show that child abuse occurs in 30-60% of family violence cases that involve families with children.

Edleson, J.L. The overlap between child maltreatment and women battering. Violence against Women. Feb. 1999.

ATVP services are free and provided to clients without discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, political beliefs, sex, disability, age, national origin, sexual orientation, or marital status.

Why is it Difficult to Leave?

No one enjoys or deserves abuse. A person's reasons for staying in an abusive relationship are many and varied. It may be dangerous to leave the abuser (women face a dramatic increase in serious injury and murder when leaving an abusive relationship), they may be financially dependent upon the abusive partner, or leaving could mean living in fear of and/or losing custody of their children.

Barriers to Leaving for Women

Lack of Resources

- Many women have at least one dependent child
- Many women are not employed outside the home
- Many women have no property that is solely theirs
- Women may fear losing their children
- Women face a significant decline in living standards after leaving

Institutional Responses

- Shelters may be full
- Clergy may be trained to see the ultimate goal as saving a marriage
- Some may treat domestic violence as a "family matter" rather than a social crime
- Protection orders often do little to prevent a released abuser from returning and repeating the abuse

Traditional Thinking

- Many women do not believe divorce or separation is an alternative
- Many women believe that even a violent father is better than no father for their children
- Many women believe that they are responsible for making their marriage work
- Women isolated from friends and family may believe that there is nowhere to turn
- Many women rationalize their abuser's behavior by blaming stress, alcohol or work, and that it will get better

ATVP

Celebrating 25 Years of Survivors' Strength in 2005

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24-Hour Hotline
Collect Crisis Calls Accepted

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Understanding Domestic Violence



Alternatives to Violence of the Palouse

Help for victims and
survivors of domestic
violence and
sexual assault

24-hour Crisis Hotline
(509) 332-HELP
OR
(208) 883-HELP