

About Domestic Violence and Abuse

Domestic violence can take on a number of forms. Some common forms include:

- **Physical** - Punching, hitting, kicking, slapping, biting, strangulation, burning, etc.
- **Verbal** - Name-calling, putting survivor down, derogatory statements
- **Mental** - "Mind games," making the survivor think they are "crazy."
- **Financial** - Withholding monies from the survivor, making survivor ask for allowance.
- **Sexual** - Making the survivor do something they are not comfortable doing, withholding sex as a punishment, unfaithfulness, rape, forced sex, or sex as an obligation or "duty."
- **Emotional/Psychological** - keeping survivor awake for long periods of time, extreme isolation

Abuse means the occurrence of one or more of the following acts between family or household members, sexual or intimate partners or persons who share biological parenthood:

- Attempting to cause or intentionally, knowingly or recklessly causing bodily injury, serious bodily injury, rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, statutory sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault or incest with or without a deadly weapon.
- Placing another in reasonable fear of imminent serious bodily injury
- Knowingly engaging in a course of conduct or repeatedly committing acts toward another person, including following the person, without proper authority, under circumstances which place the person in reasonable fear of bodily injury.
- Family or household member includes spouses or persons who have been spouses, persons living as spouses or who lived as spouses, parents and children, other persons related by consanguinity (related by blood) or affinity (related by marriage), current or former sexual or intimate partners, or person who share biological parenthood.

Once we believe we cannot control what happens to us, it is difficult to believe that we can ever influence it. This concept is important for understanding why survivors of domestic violence do not attempt to free themselves from an abusive relationship. Once the survivors are operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality and they become passive, submissive and helpless. Some characteristics follow:

- Has been stripped of their self-esteem.
- Is in a traditional sex role stereotyped home, strongly believing in family unity.
- Accepts responsibility for batterer's actions.
- Suffers from guilt, yet denies the terror and anger.
- Feels responsible for partner's outbursts of violence.
- Most have the ability to be controlled by fear of further abuse or death.
- Believes no one will be able to stop the abuse due to sense of helplessness and hopelessness.
- Conceals their unhappiness.
- May believe they can change the batterer, or the batterer themselves will change their abusive behaviors.

- May reach out for help only after years of abuse.
- Extremely self-critical and anxious.
- Diminished self-confidence and impaired ability to make decisions.
- Sleep disturbances.
- Panic attacks.
- Has repressed or expressed rage.
- May feel depressed and have suicidal thoughts, gestures, or attempts.
- May have own issues with drug and alcohol abuse.

The following behaviors/actions are indicators of an individual MAY be or become abusive:

- Extreme jealousy or possessiveness.
- Quick push for involvement.
- Blames others for their behavior.
- You are afraid of the reactions you may get if you disagree.
- Degrades others.
- Has a history of a bad temper or bad relationships.
- Calls repeatedly to check up on you.
- Isolates you from family and/or friends.
- Wants to spend every waking moment with you or needs to know every detail of your day.

If you or someone you know is involved in a violent domestic relationship, help is available. You can contact VOICE 24 hours a day on our toll free hotline at **1-800-400-8551**.