

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is violence or the threat of violence in an intimate relationship. This is often referred to as intimate partner violence or IPV. An intimate relationship includes couples who are married, living together, or dating.

Domestic violence is sometimes called “battering” or “wife beating”: it’s always abusive. An **abuser** is a person who uses or threatens the use of violence to control another person. A **victim** is a person to whom a violent act is directed.

Many abusers grew up seeing violence as the way to express anger or as the method used to get control. Because of this, violence is what he or she uses as an adult to express anger or gain control.

Domestic violence is never okay--no one ever deserves to be abused. It is never the fault of the victim.

Psychological Abuse

Psychological abuse may include name-calling or teasing, controlling the victim's activities and relationships (hobbies, friends, etc.), controlling the victim's appearance (clothing, hair style, etc.), not allowing different opinions, threatening harm or violence, or threatening suicide if the victim doesn't cooperate with demands.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse can include punching, pushing, biting, slapping, pulling hair, kicking, pinning down, or choking.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse can include any unwanted touching or fondling, physically attacking breasts or genitals, any unwanted sexual contact, including oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse, or the use of force during sex.

Who is abused?

Domestic violence happens to people from all different kinds of backgrounds. It happens to people of all ages, races, cultures, sexual orientations, religions, economic levels, and educational levels. Both men and women can be victims of domestic violence.

What is abuse?

Abuse falls into three categories: psychological, physical, and sexual. An abuser may use any or all types to try to control the victim.

A victim may stay with the abuser for many reasons:

Fear

- Lack of physical protection.
- Fear of retaliation against victim or family.
- Fear of losing custody of children.
- Losing financial support.
- Fear of losing one's job.
- Having nowhere to live.
- Being alone.

Social and cultural reasons

- Family tells victim to stay.
- Family sees it as a private issue.
- Abuse may be viewed as acceptable in some cultures.
- Family tells victim to make the best of it.
- Others won't believe the abuse happens.
- Religious beliefs (that it is wrong to break up a marriage.)
- Cultural beliefs (that it is wrong to get help.)

Beliefs of victim

- Feels helpless to change the situation.
- Believes things will get better.
- Feels deserving of the abuse.
- Feels sorry for the abuser.
- Anxiety and fear.
- Shame.
- Depression.
- Guilt, because they feel the violence is their fault or because they can't stop it.
- Confusion about the love and anger they feel for the abuser.
- Afraid of being left by one or both parents.

What is the battering cycle?

There are usually three phases to domestic violence, called the battering cycle. The cycle continues until the abuser or victim gets out.

Phase 1

Tension builds up. There is an increase in criticism and insults.

Phase 2

Abuser explodes into violence for little or no apparent reason.

Phase 3

Abuser apologizes and says it will never happen again, or acts as if the violence never happened. The abuser is often very charming and attentive to the victim during this phase, and promises to change or attend counseling.

Remove weapons from your home.

- Set up signals** with neighbors, friends, and relatives that will let them know you are in danger. A signal could be a code word to use on the phone to indicate trouble, or closing a curtain in a certain window. Ask a neighbor to call police if violence begins.

Identify a safe place to go, and practice how you will get there. Make plans to take your children with you. Prepare older children to leave and call police from a neighbor's house if you can't get away.

During an incident:

- Call 911 for help.
- Get out if possible. If you must leave without your children, come back with the police to get them.

If you can't leave the situation:

- Avoid rooms with only one exit.
- Avoid the kitchen, bathroom, bedroom, and garage.

Develop a safety plan

If your partner is abusive, it's important to develop a safety plan for you and your children in case the violence happens again.

Make copies of important papers including:

- social security cards
- birth certificates
- restraining orders
- bank account statements
- insurance policies
- your marriage license, if you have one

Hide them with a close friend or relative.

Hide extra clothing, money, ATM and credit cards, and an extra set of keys with a close friend or relative.

Open a checking account separate from the abuser.

For more information

Domestic violence is a serious health concern for you and your children. Please speak with your doctor if you are affected by domestic violence.

For help, please call:

- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
(interpreter services available)
 - 1-800-799-7233
 - www.ndvh.org
- **Kaiser Permanente Behavioral Health Services.** Call 1-888-287-2680 for an appointment.
- **Kaiser Permanente Consulting Nurse Service.** Call 24 hours a day toll-free 1-800-297-6877.
- **Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse**
 - 206-568-7777
 - www.nwnetwork.org

The **Kaiser Permanente Resource Line** can provide information about community resources and support groups in your area. Call the Resource Line toll-free 1-800-992-2279.

You are not alone. No matter what your loved one has told you, abuse is not your fault. You have a right to live without being hurt.

