

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through intimidation and fear. It is physical abuse, threat of physical abuse, emotional, verbal, or sexual abuse by a family member or partner.

THE FACTS

Every 9 seconds in the United States a woman is beaten, usually by her male partner (United States Dept. of Justice: Special Report, 2002).

Nearly 1/3 of women who visit medical emergency rooms are there for injuries related to domestic violence (Journal of the American Medical Association, 1992).

Up to 50% of all homeless women & children in this country are fleeing domestic violence.

Men can also be victims of domestic violence.

30% of women murdered in the U.S. are murdered by their husbands, ex-husbands, or boyfriends (Bureau of Justice Statistics National Crime Victimization Survey, August 1995).

The abusive situation will NOT improve without action and may result in death.

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COMMUNITY EDUCATION

YWCA Spokane offers training to professionals, organizations, and other groups who want to learn how partner violence affects their business or community and what to do when someone they know, work with, or supervise experiences intimate-partner domestic violence.

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24hr DV Helpline: 509.326.CALL(2255)



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HOW TO HELP A FRIEND

What can I do to support a victim or survivor of domestic violence?

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WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

- Assure her that the abuse is NOT her fault or her children's fault. She did not cause the violence. No one deserves to be abused.
- Educate yourself on the myths and facts about domestic violence. Gather information about local support programs like the YWCA for both you and your friend.
- LISTEN to your friend and BELIEVE what she tells you. Let her know you care about her and will listen if she wants to talk; that may be the best help you can offer.
- Don't underestimate the danger she is in. Domestic violence can result in serious physical injury or death. The most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence is leaving an abusive relationship.
- Help her make a safety plan; think through steps she can take when her partner is abusive. Make a list of people she can call and places she can go in an emergency, including the YWCA confidential shelter.
- If she is planning to leave, DO suggest that she put together and hide a suitcase of clothing, personal items, money, identification and social security cards, birth certificates, health insurance records, checkbooks, bank records, and other important documents for herself and her children.
- Let her know that she is not alone. Domestic violence happens to women of all income and educational levels, racial and ethnic origins, religions, and ages.
- Allow her to express her feelings—do not try to take them away or change them. It is common for women to have conflicting reactions to abuse such as love and fear, guilt and anger, hope and sadness. Let her know these conflicting feelings are normal.
- Don't assume you know what's best for her. Let her know you'll support her no matter what she decides. To be helpful, be patient and respect her decisions, even if you don't agree with them.
- Encourage her to make her own decisions. It is empowering to know that someone trusts your judgment. Help her think through different options, but allow her to evaluate each one herself and trust her to make the right choices for herself.
- Take care of yourself. Helping a friend in an abusive relationship is stressful and can leave you feeling drained and helpless. You need to look after your own physical and emotional well-being. Seek support for yourself to help you with your feelings, fears, frustrations and reactions to the abuse.

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HOW CAN I KNOW FOR SURE IF THEY ARE BEING ABUSED?

The only way to know for sure if someone is being abused is to ASK.

A common myth about battered women is that they don't want to talk about their victimization. While many battered women try to hide the battering, they do so because they fear being blamed, not being believed, or being pressured to do something they're not ready or able to do.

Directly asking a woman in private, without judgment, and even without expectation that they will trust you enough to disclose, relieves her of the burden of coming forward on her own, and can tell her a lot about your caring and willingness to help.

5 HELPFUL THINGS TO SAY:

1. I will be here for you if you want my support.
2. I am afraid for your safety/life.
3. I am afraid for your children's safety/lives.
4. I will go with you to YWCA Spokane for help.
5. You deserve better.

RECOMMENDED READING

To Be an Anchor in the Storm: A Guide for Families and Friends of Abused Women by Susan Brewster

Why Does He Do That? by Lundy Bancroft

Safety Planning with Battered Women by Jill Davies, Eleanor Lyon, and Diane Monti-Catania

Trauma and Recovery by Judith Herman