

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and emotional abuse are behaviors used by one person in a relationship to control the other.

Examples of abuse include:

- name-calling or putdowns
- keeping a partner from contacting their family or friends
- withholding money
- stopping a partner from getting or keeping a job
- actual or threatened physical harm
- sexual assault
- stalking
- intimidation

Violence can be criminal and includes physical assault (hitting, pushing, shoving, etc.), sexual abuse (unwanted or forced sexual activity), and stalking. Although emotional, psychological and financial abuse are not criminal behaviors, they are forms of abuse and can lead to criminal violence.

The violence takes many forms and can happen all the time or once in a while. An important step to help yourself or someone you know in preventing or stopping violence is recognizing the warning signs.

Abusers use specific behavior to get and keep control in their relationships. Battering is a choice. It is used to gain power and control over another person. Physical abuse is only one part of a system of abusive behaviors.

Abuse is never a onetime event.

ANYONE CAN BE A VICTIM! Victims can be of any age, sex, race, culture, religion, education, employment or marital status. Although both men and women can be abused, most victims are women. Children in homes where there is domestic violence are more likely to be abused and/or neglected. Most children in these homes know about the violence. Even if a child is not physically harmed, they may have emotional and behavior problems.

What can I do if my children or I am abused?

First, make sure you and your children are safe. Go to a safe place, such as the home of a friend or a relative or an emergency shelter. Take your children with you. Call the police if you think you can't leave home safely or if you want to bring charges against your abuser.

If possible, take house keys, money and important papers with you. Do not use drugs or alcohol at this time because you need to be alert in a crisis. The staff members at emergency shelters can help you file for a court order of protection. (Source: Domestic Violence Handbook)

EARLY SIGNS OF ABUSE:

1. • Quick whirlwind romance
2. • Wanting to be with you all the time; tracking what you're doing and who you're with
3. • Jealousy at any perceived attention to or from others
4. • Attempts to isolate you in the guise of loving behavior (You don't need to work or go to school; we only need each other, criticizing friends/family for not caring about you)
5. • Hypersensitivity to perceived slights
6. • Quick to blame others for the abuse
7. • Pressures you into doing things you aren't comfortable with (If you really love me, you'll do this for me)

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

1. • Are you ever afraid of your partner?
2. • Has your partner ever actually hurt or threatened to hurt you physically or someone you care about?
3. • Does your partner ever force you to engage in sexual activities that make you uncomfortable?
4. • Do you constantly worry about your partner's moods and change your behavior to deal with them?
5. • Does your partner try to control where you go, what you do and who you see?
6. • Does your partner constantly accuse you of having affairs?
7. • Have you stopped seeing family or friends to avoid your partner's jealousy or anger?
8. • Does your partner control your finances?
9. • Does he/she threaten to kill him/herself if you leave?
10. • Does your partner claim his/her temper is out of control due to alcohol, drugs or because he/she had an abusive childhood?

If you answer **yes** to some or all of these questions, you could be suffering abuse. Remember you are not to blame and you need not face domestic violence alone. (Source: American Psychiatric Association)

IN AN EMERGENCY

If you are at home & you are being threatened or attacked:

- Stay away from the kitchen (the abuser can find weapons, like knives, there)
- Stay away from bathrooms, closets or small spaces where the abuser can trap you
- Get to a room with a door or window to escape
- Get to a room with a phone to call for help; lock the abuser outside if you can
- Call 911 (or your local emergency number) right away for help; get the dispatcher's name
- Think about a neighbor or friend you can run to for help
- If a police officer comes, tell him/her what happened; get his/her name & badge number
- Get medical help if you are hurt
- Take pictures of bruises or injuries
- Call a domestic violence program or shelter (some are listed here); ask them to help you make a safety plan

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AT HOME

- Learn where to get help; memorize emergency phone numbers
- Keep a phone in a room you can lock from the inside; if you can, get a cellular phone that you keep with you at all times
- If the abuser has moved out, change the locks on your door; get locks on the windows
- Plan an escape route out of your home; teach it to your children
- Think about where you would go if you need to escape
- Ask your neighbors to call the police if they see the abuser at your house; make a signal for them to call the police, for example, if the phone rings twice, a shade is pulled down or a light is on
- Pack a bag with important things you'd need if you had to leave quickly; put it in a safe place, or give it to a friend or relative you trust
- Include cash, car keys & important information such as: court papers, passport or birth certificates, medical records & medicines, immigration papers
- Get an unlisted phone number
- Block caller ID
- Use an answering machine; screen the calls
- Take a good self-defense course

HOW TO MAKE YOUR CHILDREN SAFER

- Teach them not to get in the middle of a fight, even if they want to help
- Teach them how to get to safety, to call 911, to give your address & phone number to the police
- Teach them who to call for help
- Tell them to stay out of the kitchen
- Give the principal at school or the daycare center a copy of your court order; tell them not to release your children to anyone without talking to you first; use a password so they can be sure it is you on the phone; give them a photo of the abuser
- Make sure the children know who to tell at school if they see the abuser
- Make sure that the school knows not to give your address or phone number to ANYONE

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF OUTSIDE THE HOME

- Change your regular travel habits
- Try to get rides with different people
- Shop and bank in a different place
- Cancel any bank accounts or credit cards you shared; open new accounts at a different bank
- Keep your court order and emergency numbers with you at all times
- Keep a cell phone & program it to 911 (or other emergency number)

HOW TO MAKE YOURSELF SAFER AT WORK

- Keep a copy of your court order at work
- Give a picture of the abuser to security and friends at work
- Tell your supervisors - see if they can make it harder for the abuser to find you
- Don't go to lunch alone
- Ask a security guard to walk you to your car or to the bus
- If the abuser calls you at work, save voice mail and save e-mail
- Your employer may be able to help you find community resources

USING THE LAW TO HELP YOU

Protection or Restraining Orders

- Ask your local domestic violence program who can help you get a civil protection order and who can help you with criminal prosecution
- Ask for help in finding a lawyer

In most places, the judge can:

- Order the abuser to stay away from you or your children
- Order the abuser to leave your home
- Give you temporary custody of your children & order the abuser to pay you temporary child support
- Order the police to come to your home while the abuser picks up personal belongings
- Give you possession of the car, furniture and other belongings
- Order the abuser to go to a batterers intervention program
- Order the abuser not to call you at work
- Order the abuser to give guns to the police

If you are worried about any of the following, make sure you:

- Show the judge any pictures of your injuries
- Tell the judge that you do not feel safe if the abuser comes to your home to pick up the children to visit with them
- Ask the judge to order the abuser to pick up and return the children at the police station or some other safe place
- Ask that any visits the abuser is permitted are at very specific times so the police will know by reading the court order if the abuser is there at the wrong time
- Tell the judge if the abuser has harmed or threatened the children; ask that visits be supervised; think about who could do that for you
- Get a certified copy of the court order
- Keep the court order with you at all times

CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

- Show the prosecutor your court orders
- Show the prosecutor medical records about your injuries or pictures if you have them
- Tell the prosecutor the name of anyone who is helping you (a victim advocate or a lawyer)
- Tell the prosecutor about any witnesses to injuries or abuse
- Ask the prosecutor to notify you ahead of time if the abuser is getting out of jail

BE SAFE AT THE COURTHOUSE

- Sit as far away from the abuser as you can; you don't have to look at or talk to the abuser; you don't have to talk to the abuser's family or friends if they are there
- Bring a friend or relative with you to wait until your case is heard

- Tell a bailiff or sheriff that you are afraid of the abuser and ask him/her to look out for you
- Make sure you have your court order before you leave
- **Ask the judge or the sheriff to keep the abuser there for a while when court is over; leave quickly**
- **If you think the abuser is following you when you leave, call the police immediately**
- **If you have to travel to another State for work or to get away from the abuser, take your protection order with you; it is valid everywhere**
(Source: American Bar Association)

If you are being abused, REMEMBER

- You are not alone
- It is not your fault
- Help is available

National Domestic Violence: Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)

[Counseling Homepage](#)

[Christian LifeSkills Homepage](#)