

What Is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a learned pattern of coercive behavior used by a person to gain power and control over their former or current intimate partner.

Domestic Violence Occurs in the Context of a Relationship: the fundamental difference between domestic violence and other forms of violence is that it occurs within an intimate relationship that is meant to be loving and protective.

Domestic Violence is a Pattern of Behaviors: it is not an isolated event, but a pattern of coercive behaviors that a batterer uses to gain power and control. Each abusive incident builds on each other, creating the victim's reality and perspective. Victims respond to the entire pattern of abuse rather than individual incidents or tactics.

Domestic violence occurs in many ways: there are many different forms of abuse, such as, physical, emotional, verbal, and economic and sexual.

Domestic Violence is Intentional and Deliberate: it's about the batterer's desire to gain power and control over their partner. The batterer chooses his/her abusive behavior because it accomplishes that goal. Generally, the tactics used by batterers fall into the categories below:

- Intimidation: uses looks, actions, or gestures to make afraid; throws things, slams doors, destroys property; kills and/or harms pets, displays weapons; threatens court proceedings
- Abusing Authority: makes all big decisions acts like "Master of the House" Requires traditional man's and woman's roles Treats like servant or "Second Class" citizen
- Verbal Attacks: uses put-downs, criticism, and judgments; humiliates in front of others; calls bad/derogatory names; threatens physical, financial or emotional harm, blackmail; and/or humiliation
- Economic control: prevents from getting or keeping a job; hides information about money/income; denies access to money; creates financial dependence; controls all money; requires accounting of every penny.
- Isolation: controls all actions - what one does, who one sees, what one reads; prevents contact with friends, family, and/or co-workers; limits outside involvement
- Minimizing, Denying & Blaming: uses jealousy to justify abuse; makes light of abuse; does not take abuse seriously; denies abuse; blames others or circumstances for abuse
- Psychological Games: erodes confidence, self-esteem, and independence; makes feel crazy; plays mind games; requires accounting for every minute of time; displays extreme jealousy has inappropriate angry and/or violent reactions; plays Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
- Physical and sexual Violence: hits, slaps, punches, pushes, kicks, stabs, chokes, rapes, or shoots; throws objects; destroys property; forces to perform something against one's will; attempts to frighten or harm by physical force; prevents safe sex
- Threats: makes and/or carries out threats; threatens suicide; threatens children; makes false reports to DSHS, Police, CPS, or INS; forces one to do illegal things; threatens court proceedings
- Children: exploits guilty feelings about children; uses children to relay messages; uses visitation to harass; uses custody to gain access and control; threatens to harm and/or kidnap children

The Cycle of Domestic Violence

Tension Building Phase: This stage involves arguments and threats and minor incidents (slapping, verbal and/or psychological abuse) with increasing tension and fear of the batterer. This may be the time when a victim will seek out help through law enforcement intervention only to be told nothing can be done until violence occurs.

THE VICTIM MAY

- Placate batterer by nurturing or staying out of the batterer's way
- Control, manipulate environment to prevent escalation of violence
- Minimize, ignore, deny violence
- Cover for batterer, excuse behavior
- Begin to withdraw emotionally from overwhelming stress
- The victim's inability to face the reality of situation allows the batterer to escalate the violence.

Battering Phase: Pushing, shoving, hair-pulling, slapping, unwanted sexual contact, beating, choking, punching, use of weapons: This is usually the shortest phase lasting a few minutes to 24 hours.

THE VICTIM MAY

- Feel a complete loss of control
- Feel psychologically trapped
- Wait to seek medical treatment if s/he chooses to go at all
- Not experience the effects of the trauma for some time
- Not trust law enforcement, fear their involvement will further enrage batterer, defend the batterer to police

Honeymoon Phase: Period of Relative Calm: the environment becomes tranquil, maybe even pleasant. The batterer often apologizes and promises to never to behave this way again or to get help. This phase can be long early in a relationship, but usually becomes progressively shorter over time. This calm environment may become quite brief with the tension phase beginning again almost immediately.

THE VICTIM MAY

- Experience the illusion of well-being
- Believe that s/he is the sole support of the emotional stability of the batterer
- Believe the many promises of the batterer
- Feel responsible for batterer's wellbeing

And then the cycle starts again at phase one………