

Domestic Violence is a prevalent and dangerous crime in our country. Domestic Violence is Physical, but also financial, emotional and sexual. You can be in a domestic violence relationship without any physical violence. However, emotional abuse is ALWAYS present in domestic violence. It crosses all boundaries – religious, cultural, economic, educational. Domestic Violence DOES NOT MAKE SENSE on ANY level. But, the patterns of domestic violence are clear if you know what to look for.

Domestic Violence abusers can be male or female. And, the abuser’s pattern of behavior will be the same, regardless of whether the abuser is male or female.

Domestic Violence is about (abusive) power and control. It is not caused by anger, addiction, or poor coping skills, but these things can make a power and control relationship worse. The domestic violence perpetrator has a low self esteem and gaining power and control over the victim makes him/her feel more powerful, and more “in control” of their world. The abuser NEEDS the victim - when the victim stays with the abuser after receiving the abusive behavior, that makes the abuser feel powerful and reinforces the feeling they have of being unconditionally loved by the victim. It’s the “bully” mentality.

Domestic Violence is the leading cause of injury for women, more than car accidents, muggings and rape – COMBINED!!

Domestic Violence is a learned behavior. Children who grow up in domestic violence homes are more likely to become batterers or to become victims of domestic violence.

Children who grow up in domestic violence cannot escape child abuse - either by neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual. It puts these children at greater risk for unhealthy relationships in their lives, as well as other negative social impacts.

Domestic Violence Warning Signs

95% of victims of domestic violence are women. We know men can be victims, and the following warning signs can pertain to female abusers as well as men.

- He comes in like a hero or “knight and shining armor” wanting to rescue you
- He is focused only on you
- He wants to always know where you are and whom you are with
- He checks up on you – checks your phone, your mileage, times your time to get home from the store or from work, hangs out at your place of employment, tracks your location on his phone app, etc
- He texts or calls you abnormal amounts
- Isolates you from friends and family, accuses them of trying to destroy the relationship.
- He is on the defense and does not like criticism
- Inability to admit fault, take blame. This also looks like blame-shifting. Everything is someone else’s fault, or the blame is constantly shifted to a partner. Abusers often think the world is against them and they are a victim of their circumstances.

- He's charismatic, charming, and fun on the outside but has split personality – Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde
- Explosive temper
- He is uncomfortable with feelings
- He does not like authority figures
- He threatens to use your secrets against you
- Verbal abuse. Judging, criticizing, condemning, degrading using cruel words. He makes fun of you or embarrasses you in front of others
- He wants all of your attention
- Blames you for all of his behavior – you made me so angry....you're hurting me by not doing what I want...if only you listen to me...I'm sorry BUT...
- He displays cruelty toward animals and children, may use harsh punishments on children or pets... completely neglect pets or other animals they encounter, or put them at unnecessary levels of risk such as leaving a dog tied up with no shade or water.
- Hypersensitivity. Beyond overreaction. Many abusers get easily upset over any inconvenience or personal slight. Something as minor as a partner suggesting a different restaurant for dinner can be made out by an abuser as an attack on them.
- He is sexually controlling. Demands or forces sex regardless of your wishes (even if the victim is ill). Forces you to watch porn, or participate in sexual acts you do not want to do
- You feel controlled
- He displays grandiose behavior
- He is arrogant
- He has a “dual personality”
- Verbal threats and threats of violence – I'll slap your face, kill you, the children, break your neck.....
- Uses the children as a manipulative tool to stay – I'll take the children if you leave....you can't support the children if you leave
- He displays antisocial behaviors:
 - He does not take responsibility for his behavior
 - He lacks empathy
 - His promises and apologies are empty.

Phrases like the following, said to actual survivors should raise a major red flag if someone says them to you, indicating a desire to control, degrade or shame a partner.

- *“You can go..... but I don't want you to go.”*
- *“Couples don't have secrets—I need to be able to read your texts or emails whenever I want to.”*

- *“You’d be much more pretty if....”*
- *“I bring the money into this house, so I decide.”*
- *“I’ll give you money to spend. You don’t need to worry about a bank account.”*
- *“How much did you spend? I need to see all the receipts.”*
- *“Where were you today?”*
- *“I tried calling ... why didn’t you answer?” [This is after 15 missed calls in a few hours.]*
- *“Why did you make me do that?”*
- *“You don’t love me as much as I love you.”*
- *“No one will ever understand you like I do.”*
- *“If you loved me, you’d do this.”*
- *“You’re always creating drama/making a big deal out of nothing/starting a fight/trying to get the last word in.”*
- *“If you leave me, no one else will want you.”*
- *If you leave me I’ll kill myself.*
- *“You’re not smart/successful/strong enough to survive without me.”*
- *“You need to go on a diet.”*
- *“Why don’t you look as hot as you did when we first met?”*
- *“You’re such a slut/you dress like a whore.”*
- *“This is why no one likes you.”*
- *You are having an affair at work.... I know it! (When actually THEY are having affairs).*

Research has found that men who choked their partners were **10 times more likely** to eventually kill them.

The Danger Assessment study found that women who were threatened or assaulted with a gun were **20 times more likely** than other women to be murdered.

Women whose partners threatened them with murder were **15 times more likely** than other women to be killed.

There are a many factors that go into the creation of an abuser, with the abuser’s attitudes and beliefs playing a large role in his behavior. Abusers believe that they are entitled to privileges that do not apply to their partner. An abuser learns manipulative and controlling behavior from several sources, including key male role models, peers and pervasive cultural messages. By the time abusers reach adulthood, their manipulative behaviors have been integrated on such a deep level that the abuser may largely act automatically, but that does not mean that his behaviors are not intentional. It is important to note that abuse is a choice made by the abuser. Abusers also gain many rewards for their behaviors such as free labor, being center of attention, financial control, public status, approval of friends, and – when they really feel insignificant, their power and control of the victim makes them feel powerful.

FOUR PSYCHOLOGICAL STAGES OF THE BATTERED WOMAN SYNDROME

DENIAL

The woman refuses to admit—even to herself—that she has been beaten or that there is a “problem” in her marriage. She may call each incident an “accident”. She offers excuses for her husband’s violence and each time firmly believes it will never happen again.

GUILT

She now acknowledges there is a problem, but considers herself responsible for it. She “deserves” to be beaten, she feels, because she has defects in her character and is not living up to her husband’s expectations.

ENLIGHTENMENT

The woman no longer assumes responsibility for her husband's abusive treatment, recognizing that no one “deserves” to be beaten. She is still committed to her marriage, though, and stays with her husband, hoping they can work things out.

RESPONSIBILITY

Accepting the fact that her husband will not, or can not, stop his violent behavior, the battered woman decides she will no longer submit to it and starts a new life.

Victims of Domestic Violence have low self esteem. They begin to believe they don't deserve a better relationship. They begin to believe what the abuser tells them – that they are “less than” and no one else would have them. In order to survive the relationship, the victim's focus begins to narrow to the abuser. Many victims compare their relationship to Stockholm Syndrome, (or Trauma bonding), which is typically considered a psychological defense or coping mechanism experienced by some during extreme trauma, like kidnapping, domestic abuse or human sex trafficking.

If you, or someone you know is in an abusive relationship, **there is help available.** Statistics tells us that when a person is in an abusive relationship that when they leave, their chances of being murdered increase 75%. This is a dangerous time, and there are

advocates available to help the victim safety plan for leaving a domestic violence relationship.

For additional information about support in the Tennessee Community you are in, please access our resource information guide listed by county located on this website.

Some information adapted from Stop Violence Against Women.