

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## Definition:

Domestic abuse occurs when one partner in an intimate relationship tries to violate or control the other partner (National Domestic Violence Hotline [NDVH], 2013). Domestic violence can be perpetrated by both men and women of any age, and can be found in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships (Help Guide [HG], 2015). In the United States, more than 10 million women and men are physically abused by an intimate partner, and intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crimes annually (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2015).

There are many different forms of domestic abuse, including physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, and financial abuse (NDVH, 2013).

- ◆ Physical abuse is the use of physical force that can result in physical pain or bodily injury to the victim. Examples include shoving, beating, and burning the victim.
- ◆ Emotional or psychological abuse occurs when an individual is exposed to any kind of behavior that results in psychological trauma, such as anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. This includes humiliation or embarrassment, controlling behavior, social isolation, disregarding or trivializing needs, and damaging or destroying property.
- ◆ Sexual abuse or coercion occurs when an individual is forced into unwanted sexual activity. The abuser may use force, make threats, or take advantage of victims who are unable to give consent.
- ◆ Financial abuse is the unauthorized or improper use of the victim's resources in order for the abuser to gain power and control in the relationship. Financial abuse can be a powerful way of keeping the victim trapped in the relationship. There are many different examples of financial abuse, including withholding money, stealing money or possessions, coercion or deception to surrender finances or property, and forbidding the victim to work.

Domestic abuse can be constant or sporadic and is not always easily identified. It is important to be aware of signs of abuse. Some examples are (HG, 2015):

- ◆ Fear of the abusing partner
- ◆ Constantly making excuses and trying to defend the abusing partner
- ◆ Unexplained injuries
- ◆ Absences from work or school
- ◆ Feelings of emotional numbness or helplessness
- ◆ Feelings of guilt
- ◆ Low self-esteem

There are also signs that an individual may be abusing their partner. These signs include the following (HG, 2015):

- ◆ Jealousy
- ◆ Aggressive behavior displayed toward family members and friends
- ◆ Isolating and controlling the partner who is being abused
- ◆ Moody or intimidating personality



## Prevention & Treatment (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2015)

Education is the best way to prevent domestic violence. Programs to promote healthy behaviors in relationships and offer strategies to help people of any age identify and prevent abuse are widely available.

There are several steps involved in stopping ongoing abuse. The first and most important step is to identify that abuse is occurring; it is then crucial to work with law enforcement and loved ones to help remove the individual from the abusive situation. Immediate removal from the abusive situation may not always be possible. Deciding to leave an abuser can be a very stressful and scary decision, thus it is important to create a plan to help the abused individual leave in the safest way possible. This

plan should always involve law enforcement and include a safe place for the individual to go, such as a shelter or a loved one's house (NDVH, 2013).

Once in a safe place, healing can begin. Medical attention and treatment, as well as counseling services, are often necessary. Support groups and shelters are also available to help individuals of abuse. For more information and help, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline 800-799-7233. If you or someone you know is in immediate danger, call 911 or the local police.

### *Disclaimer:*

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## REFERENCES

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