

Domestic violence can affect a wide range of people including children, teens, women, and men. The negative effects of domestic violence can be long-standing and can play a part in continuing the cycle of violence for generations. Faith communities can play as safe places for discussion and as educators of violence prevention. As a individual, wife, brother, sister, child, friend, Faith Community Nurse or Health Minister you have an opportunity to sharing information that you receive about domestic violence.

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence usually involves issues of power and control in intimate relationships. The level of violence often escalates over time, even though there are often periods of calm between abusive episodes. Although they are not necessarily the causes of domestic violence, social and economic factors can play a role. Alcoholism and substance abuse can exacerbate the situation. Domestic violence cuts across all economic and education levels, all age groups, ethnicities and other social and community characteristics. Your neighbor, your office mate, even your friend may be in an abusive relationship.

It touches all of us. Domestic violence impacts job turnover, school performance, and contributes to the high cost of law enforcement, civil/criminal justice, health services, mental health, and substance abuse treatment, human services and community-based services. We're all paying for it.

Perhaps the most insidious thing about abuse is its effect on children. Boys who witness abuse are more likely to become abusive, and girls who witness abuse are more likely to be abused. It's estimated that up to 13 million children witness abuse each year.

Stopping domestic violence is a daunting task. But domestic violence is also learned behavior that can be unlearned. Change is possible.

Child Abuse & Neglect: Child abuse and neglect involves the harm or endangerment of a child's physical or emotional health and development. Child abuse can involve emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and/or neglect. The effects of child abuse and neglect can be long-lasting, even for a lifetime if gone untreated. The level of severity covers a wide range of experiences and the need for individualized treatment is critical.

Emotional & Verbal Abuse: Survivors of domestic violence recount stories of put-downs, public humiliation, name-calling, mind games and manipulation by their partners. Many say that the emotional abuse they have suffered has left the deepest scars.

Isolation: It is common for an abuser to be extremely jealous, and insist that the victim not see her friends or family members. The resulting feeling of isolation may then be increased for the victim if she loses her job as a result of absenteeism or decreased productivity (which are often associated with people who are experiencing domestic violence).

Threats and Intimidation: Threats -- including threats of violence, suicide, or of taking away the children -- are a very common tactic employed by the batterer. The existence of emotional and verbal abuse, attempts to isolate, and threats and intimidation within a relationship may be an

indication that physical abuse is to follow. Even if they are not accompanied by physical abuse, the effect of these incidents must not be minimized.

Source: <http://www.standagainstdv.org/aboutdomviolence.php>,
<http://www.dm.usda.gov/shmd/aware.htm>

Who are the Victims of Domestic Violence?

- Women were attacked about six times more often by offenders with whom they had an intimate relationship than were male violence victims.
- Nearly 30 percent of all female homicide victims were known to have been killed by their husbands, former husbands or boyfriends. In contrast, just over 3 percent of male homicide victims were known to have been killed by their wives, former wives or girlfriends.
- Husbands, former husbands, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends committed more than one million violent acts against women.
- Family members or other people they knew committed more than 2.7 million violent crimes against women.
- Husbands, former husbands, boyfriends and ex-boyfriends committed 26 percent of rapes and sexual assaults.
- Forty-five percent of all violent attacks against female victims 12 years old and older by multiple offenders involve offenders they know.
- The rate of intimate-offender attacks on women separated from their husbands was about three times higher than that of divorced women and about 25 times higher than that of married women.
- Women of all races were equally vulnerable to attacks by intimates. Female victims of violence were more likely to be injured when attacked by someone they knew than female victims of violence who were attacked by strangers.

Source: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/shmd/aware.htm>

Teen Dating Violence

Teen dating violence often is hidden because teenagers typically:

- are inexperienced with dating relationships.
- are pressured by peers to act violently.
- want independence from parents.
- have "romantic" views of love.

Teen dating violence is influenced by how teenagers look at themselves and others.

Young men may believe:

- they have the right to "control" their female partners in any way necessary.
- "masculinity" is physical aggressiveness
- they "possess" their partner.
- they should demand intimacy.
- they may lose respect if they are attentive and supportive toward their girlfriends.

Young women may believe:

- they are responsible for solving problems in their relationships
- their boyfriend's jealousy, possessiveness and even physical abuse, is "romantic."

- abuse is "normal" because their friends are also being abused.
- there is no one to ask for help.

Early warning signs that your date may eventually become abusive:

- Extreme jealousy
- Controlling behavior
- Quick involvement
- Unpredictable mood swings
- Alcohol and drug use
- Explosive anger
- Isolates you from friends and family
- Uses force during an argument
- Shows hypersensitivity
- Believes in rigid sex roles
- Blames others for his problems or feelings
- Cruel to animals or children
- Verbally abusive
- Abused former partners
- Threatens violence

Common clues that indicate a teenager may be experiencing dating violence:

- Physical signs of injury
- Truancy, dropping out of school
- Changes in mood or personality & Isolation
- Use of drugs/alcohol
- Pregnancy
- Emotional outburst

Sources: <http://www.acadv.org/dating.html>

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Extracted from Domestic Violence Toolkit 2013