

Frequently Asked Questions: Domestic Violence

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviors that adults or adolescents use against their current or former intimate partners that harms the other physically, emotionally, or sexually.

What types of abuse exist?

There are four types of abuse. Physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse are assaults repeated on the same victim by the same perpetrator.

What are ways in which someone can be physically abused?

A victim may be physically abused by being scratched, bitten, grabbed, or spit on. The batterer may throw objects, subject the victim to reckless driving, shake, shove, push, punch, strangle, burn, or kill the victim. In addition, the batterer might withhold food as punishment and/or refuse to help when the victim is sick, injured, or pregnant.

What are ways in which someone can be sexually abused?

The batterer may withhold sex and affection as punishment. The batterer may inflict injuries through sex, physically force sex, coerce the victim into sexual acts that make the victim uncomfortable, or deny the victim contraception or protection against sexually transmitted diseases.

What are ways in which someone can be psychologically abused?

The batterer may verbally attack the victim, play mind games, ignore feelings, withhold approval or affection, force the victim to do degrading things, or attack vulnerabilities such as language skills, educational level, or physical appearance. The batterer may also stalk, threaten to leave, or harass his victim.

What are ways in which someone can be economically abused?

The batterer may control all the money, refuse to work, force his victim to not work outside the home, or ruin his victim's credit rating.

What are the national statistics on domestic violence?

Battering is the major cause of injury for women ages 14 – 45, causing more injuries than automobile accidents, muggings, and rapes combined. Family violence costs the United States \$67 billion annually. This includes medical expenses, police and court costs, and shelter and foster care services.

What are the statistics on domestic violence in St. Louis?

In 2008, there were 6,855 incidents of domestic violence reported to law enforcement in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. 1,704 women and children lived in a St. Louis-area domestic violence emergency shelter. Sadly, during that same year, 5,315 people were turned away from emergency shelters because they were full.

Why does a man abuse?

A man abuses for several reasons. First, a man chooses to abuse. He continues to do so because it works. The abuse gives him power and control over someone. Also, the abuse allows him to place blame on another individual without taking any responsibility. A man might also choose to abuse because he believes he has the right to treat women as objects. Finally, he might have grown up in an abusive home, so therefore he continues the cycle because it is what he is familiar with.

Why does the victim stay?

A woman might stay with her abuser because she does not have emotional support from family and friends to leave. She might also not have the monetary means to start a new life. She may love the person and feel she is to blame because she can't "do the right thing."

What obstacles might the victim face?

The woman might not have a job, an education, or the financial means to support herself or her family. Most shelters only accommodate victims and their children for 60 to 90 days. This is not enough time for them to become financially or emotionally stable.

How are children impacted?

Children believe it's their fault their father is violent. They might act aggressively toward other children, whine, throw tantrums, wet the bed, fight at school, have difficulty concentrating, have anxiety, startle easily, lie, steal, or become physically ill. Children learn that intimidation is what one uses to get what he or she wants.

How do you know if someone is being abused?

The woman's husband or boyfriend might act very controlling when he's with her. He might also embarrass or put her down in front of others. She might cancel plans at the last minute, or discontinue relationships with family and friends. Her children might also be upset frequently or act quiet and withdrawn. In any case, it is important to not down play the danger. Offer support, and let the person know that there are agencies that can help.

What should you do if you are being abused?

It is important to contact the police if you need help leaving or you need to charge your abuser. Advocates in shelters can help with protective orders.

What support services are available?

There are hotlines, crisis interventions, emergency shelters, transitional housing, and support groups dedicated to helping women escape their batterers.