

It Can Happen To Anyone

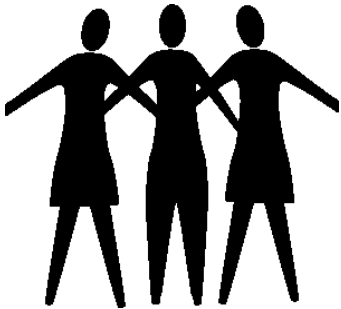
Domestic violence is a serious problem that has been happening for centuries. In the U.S. each year it affects millions of people, most often women. Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of employment or educational level, race or ethnic background, religion, marital status, physical ability, age, or sexual orientation.

It Is Not Your Fault

If you are being abused by your partner, you may feel confused, afraid, angry and/or trapped. All of these emotions are normal responses to abuse.

You may also blame yourself for what is happening. But no matter what others might say, you are never responsible for your partner's abusive actions. Batters choose to be abusive.

No one deserves to be battered.



Identifying Support

Developing a support network can be very helpful to you as you plan for safety. There are many places to turn for assistance.

Community support. Friends, family, women's and community groups, churches, and service providers (such as legal, health, counseling centers) can provide a variety of resources, support, and assistance.

Domestic violence services. In many communities there are organizations that provide free and confidential help to individuals who are being battered. Information about finding/using these services is on the back of this brochure.

Legal Options

Criminal charges. If you or other loved ones have been physically injured, threatened, raped, harassed or stalked, you can report these crimes to the police. Criminal charges may lead to your abuser being arrested and possibly imprisoned.

Restraining/protective orders. Even if you don't want to press criminal charges, you can file for a civil court order that directs your partner to stay away from you. In many states restraining/protective orders can also evict your partner from your home, grant support or child custody, or ban him/her from having weapons.

Planning for Safety

Without help, domestic violence often continues to get more severe over time. It can sometimes become deadly.

“ Batters choose to be abusive. No one deserves to be battered. ”

To increase your safety:

Tell others you trust such as friends, family, neighbors and co-workers, what is happening and talk about ways they might be able to help.

Memorize emergency numbers for the local police (such as 911), support persons and crisis hotlines.

Identify escape routes and places to go if you need to flee from an unsafe situation quickly.

Talk with your children about what they should do if a violent incident occurs or if they are afraid.

Put together an emergency bag with money/checkbooks, extra car keys, medicine, and important papers such as birth certificates, social security cards, immigration documents, and medical cards. Keep it somewhere safe and accessible, such as with a trusted friend.

Trust your instincts — if you think you are in immediate danger, you probably are. Get to a safe place as soon as you can.

Domestic violence, or battering, is a pattern of abusive behaviors that some individuals use to control their intimate partners. Battering can include physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and other controlling behaviors. The following questions may help you decide whether you are being abused.

Does your partner ever...

hit, kick, shove or injure you?

use weapons/objects against you or threaten to?

force or coerce you to engage in unwanted sexual acts?

threaten to hurt you or others, have you deported, disclose your sexual orientation or other personal information?

control what you do and who you see in a way that interferes with your work, education or other personal activities?

steal or destroy your belongings?

constantly criticize you, call you names or put you down? make you feel afraid?

deny your basic needs such as food, housing, clothing, or medical and physical assistance?

Help is Available

There are many places that offer 24-hour support, emergency shelter, advocacy, and information about resources and safe options for you and your children. For assistance call:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

1-800-787-3224 TTY

(assistance available in over 140 languages)

OR

Access your local resources:

This brochure is part of a series developed by the the Public Education Technical Assistance Project of the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. It can be freely reproduced. For more information, call (800) 537-2238 / (800)553-2508 TTY.

If you answered "yes" to any of the above, it may be time to think about your safety.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE...
Putting the Pieces Together**

Finding Safety and Support

