

19th September 2015

Violence in the home

Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling and coercive conduct that serves to deprive victims of safety and autonomy.

Perpetrators believe they are entitled to power and control over their partners and children and perceive all interactions within relationships through a prism of compliance or disobedience.

Perpetrators use abusive tactics to reinforce their rules and maintain absolute control over their victims.

Perpetrators come from all races, religions, socioeconomic classes, areas of the world, educational levels and occupations. They often appear charming and attentive to outsiders, and even to their partners, at first. Many perpetrators are very good at disguising their abusive behavior to appear socially acceptable. Once they develop a relationship with a partner however, they become more and more abusive.

Characteristics

Domestic violence perpetrators:

- seek control of the thoughts, beliefs and conduct of their partner and children.
- restrict all of the victim's rights and freedoms
- punish their partner for breaking their rules or challenging the perpetrator's authority





Men who batter:

- minimize the seriousness of their violence
- believe they are entitled control their partner and children
- use anger, alcohol/drug use, and stress as excuses for their abusive behaviors
- blame the victim for the violence

A batterer covers up his violence by denying, minimizing, and blaming the victim. He often convinces his partner that the abuse is less serious than it is, or that it is her fault. He may tell her that "if only" she had acted differently, he wouldn't have abused her. Sometimes he will say, "You made me do it." Victims of abuse do not cause violence. *The batterer is responsible for every act of abuse committed.*

Domestic violence is a learned behavior. It is learned through:

- observation.
- experience.
- culture.
- family.
- community (peer group, school, etc.).

Abuse is not caused by:

- mental illness.

Personality disorders, mental illness, and other problems may compound domestic violence, but the abusive behavior must be addressed separately.

- genetics.
- alcohol and drugs.

Many men blame their violence on the effects of drug and alcohol use.

Alcohol abuse is present in about 50 percent of battering relationships. Research shows that alcohol and other drug abuse is commonly a symptom of an abusive personality, not the cause. Men often blame their intoxication for the abuse, or use it as an excuse to use violence. Regardless, it is an excuse, not a cause.

Taking away the alcohol, does not stop the abuse. Substance abuse must be treated before or in conjunction with domestic violence treatment programs.



A batterer abuses because he wants to, and thinks he has a "right" to his behavior. He may think he is superior to his partner and his children and is entitled to use whatever means necessary to control them.

Some ways batterers deny and minimize their violence:

- "I hit the wall, not her head."
- "She bruises easily."
- "She just fell down the steps."
- "Her face got in the way of my fist."



Characteristics of a Potential Batterer:

- Jealousy
- Controlling behavior
- Quick involvement
- Unrealistic expectations
- Isolation of victim
- Blames others for his problems
- Blames others for his feelings
- Hypersensitivity
- Cruelty to animals or children
- "Playful" use of force during sex
- Verbal abuse
- Rigid sex roles
- Jekyll and Hyde type personality
- Manipulation

- History of past battering
- Threats of violence
- Breaking or striking objects
- Any force during an argument
- Objectification of women
- Tight control over finances
- Minimization of the violence
- Manipulation through guilt
- Extreme highs and lows
- Expects her to follow his orders
- Frightening rage
- Use of physical force
- Closed mindedness

Abusers often try to manipulate the "system" by:

- Threatening to call Child Protective Services or the Department of Human Resources and making actual reports that his partner neglects or abuses the children when it in reality is the abuser.
- Changing lawyers and delaying court hearings to increase his partner's financial hardship.
- Telling everyone (friends, family, police, etc.) that she is "crazy" and making things up.
- Using the threat of prosecution to get her to return to him.
- Telling police she hit him, too.
- Giving false information about the criminal justice system to confuse his partner or prevent her from acting on her own behalf.
- Using children as leverage to get and control his victim.



Abusers may try to manipulate their partners and children, especially after a violent episode.

He may try to "win" her and children back in some of these ways:

- Invoking sympathy from her, her family and friends.
- Talking about his "difficult childhood".
- Becoming overly charming, reminding her of the good times they've had.
- Bringing romantic gifts, flowers, dinner.
- Crying, begging for forgiveness.
- Promising it will "never happen again."
- Promising to get counseling, to change.

Abuse gets worse and more frequent over time.

Intervention

Perpetrator Intervention Programs For Abusers

Abusers can enter voluntarily or be court ordered to Perpetrator Intervention Programs. It is important to note that there are no guarantees that he will change his violent behavior. He is the only one that can make the decision--and commitment--to change. In the program, an abuser should become aware of his pattern of violence and learn techniques for maintaining nonviolent behavior, such as "time outs" "buddy" phone calls, support groups, relaxation techniques, and exercise.

How do you know if he is really changing?

Positive signs include:

- He has stopped being violent or threatening to you or others
- He acknowledges that his abusive behavior is wrong
- He understands that he does not have the right to control and dominate you
- You don't feel afraid when you are with him.
- He does not coerce or force you to have sex.
- You can express anger toward him without feeling intimidated.
- He does not make you feel responsible for his anger or frustration.
- He respects your opinion even if he doesn't agree with it.
- He respects your right to say "no."

Six Big Lies

If you hear your partner making these statements while he is in a treatment program for abusers, you should understand that he is lying to himself, and to you.

- "I'm not the only one who needs counseling."
- "I'm not as bad as a lot of other guys in there."
- "As soon as I'm done with this program, I'll be cured."
- "We need to stay together to work this out."
- "If I weren't under so much stress, I wouldn't have such a short fuse."
- "Now that I'm in this program, you have to be more understanding."

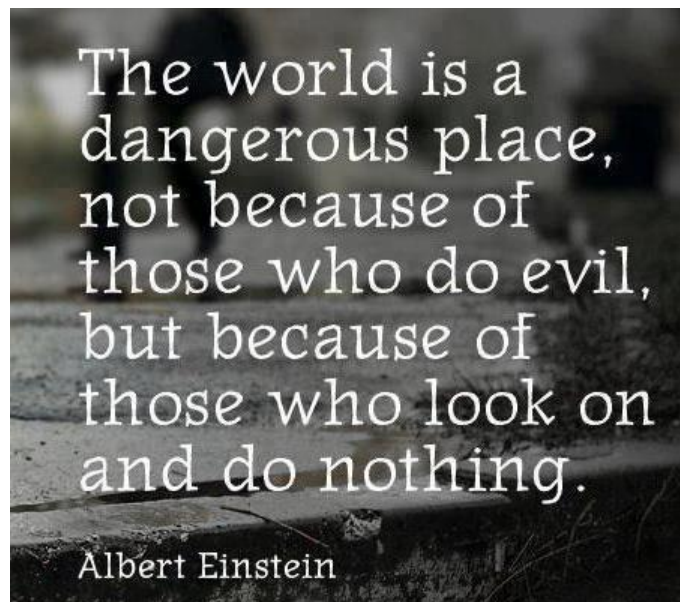


Red Flags Of Abuse

You may be involved with a perpetrator if any of the following "red flags" exist in the relationship:

- Quick involvement- the perpetrator pushes for a commitment or major event to occur very early in the relationship.
- Isolation -the perpetrator begins asking you to spend less time with your friends and family and more time with him. You end up no longer maintaining close relationships with friends or family members.
- Suggestions for change- the perpetrator has lots of suggestions on how you can improve your appearance, behavior etc. You begin to make changes solely based on these suggestions.
- Controlling behaviors- the perpetrator influences your decisions on hobbies, activities, dress, friends, daily routines etc. You begin to make fewer and fewer decisions without the perpetrator's opinion or influence.
- Information gathering and pop-ins - the perpetrator wants to know the specific details of your day and rarely leaves you alone when you are not with him, such as when you are at work or out with friends.
- Any forms of abuse - the perpetrator may use name calling, intimidation, humiliation, shoving, pushing or other forms of abuse to get you to do whatever they want you to do.

These red flags may indicate that you are involved with a perpetrator of domestic violence. These red flags may occur early in the relationship and be explained by the perpetrator as caring or loving behaviors such as "I just check on you because I miss you" or "I just want what is best for you" or "I just want us to work on our relationship and spend more time together."



This newsletter has been issued by:

TraumaCare, Box 1807, Magaliesview, Gauteng, 2067

www.traumacare.co.za * mail@traumacare.co.za * Tel: 071 592 9690

Play Therapy * Counselling * Trauma Counselling

Please note that this information must not be used for diagnostic purposes. Please visit a medical professional for a correct diagnosis.