



Decatur Police Department

DOMESTIC ABUSE AWARENESS/PREVENTION TIPS

Domestic abuse occurs when a person tries to dominate and control the other person. Domestic abuse that includes physical violence is called domestic violence. In order for the abuse to be domestic you must be family members related by blood or marriage, current or former spouses, current or former boyfriends or girlfriends and current or former roommates.

Domestic violence and abuse are used for one purpose and one purpose only: to gain and maintain total control over you. An abuser doesn't "play fair." Abusers use fear, guilt, shame and intimidation to wear you down and keep you under his or her thumb. Your abuser may also threaten you, hurt you or hurt those around you.

Domestic violence and abuse does not discriminate. It happens among heterosexual couples and in same-sex partnerships. It occurs within all age ranges, ethnic backgrounds and economic levels. And while women are more commonly victimized, men are also abused—especially verbally and emotionally. The bottom line is that abusive behavior is never acceptable, whether it's coming from a man, a woman, a teenager, or an older adult. You deserve to feel valued, respected, and safe.

Getting out of an abusive or violent relationship isn't easy. Maybe you're still hoping that things will change. Maybe you're afraid of what your partner will do if he/she discovers you're trying to leave. Whatever your reasons, you probably feel trapped and helpless.

Recognizing abuse is the first step to getting help

Domestic abuse often escalates from threats and verbal abuse to violence. And while physical injury may be the most obvious danger, the emotional and psychological consequences of domestic abuse are also severe. Emotionally abusive relationships can destroy your self-worth, lead to anxiety and depression, and make you feel helpless and alone. No one should have to endure this kind of pain—and your first step to breaking free is recognizing that your situation is abusive. Once you acknowledge the reality of the abusive situation, then you can get the help you need.

Signs of an abusive relationship

There are many signs of an abusive relationship. The most telling sign is fear of your partner. If you feel like you have to walk on eggshells around your partner—constantly watching what you say and do in order to avoid a blow-up—chances are your relationship is unhealthy and abusive. Other signs that you may be in an abusive relationship include a partner who belittles you or tries to control you, and feelings of self-loathing, helplessness, and desperation.

SIGNS THAT YOU'RE IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

Your Inner Thoughts and Feelings

Do you:

- Feel afraid of your partner much of the time?
- Avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?
- Feel that you can't do anything right for your partner?
- Believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- Wonder if you're the one who is crazy?
- Feel emotionally numb or helpless?

Your Partner's Belittling Behavior

Does your partner:

- Humiliate or yell at you?
- Criticize you and put you down?
- Treat you so badly that you're embarrassed for your friends or family to see?
- Ignore or put down your opinions or accomplishments?
- Blame you for his own abusive behavior?
- See you as property or a sex object, rather than as a person?

Your Partner's Violent Behavior or Threats

Does your partner:

- Have a bad and unpredictable temper?
- Hurt you, or threaten to hurt or kill you?
- Threaten to take your children away or harm them?
- Threaten to commit suicide if you leave?
- Force you to have sex?
- Destroy your belongings?

Your Partner's Controlling Behavior

Does your partner:

- Act excessively jealous and possessive?
- Control where you go or what you do?
- Keep you from seeing your friends or family?
- Limit your access to money, the phone, or the car?
- Constantly check up on you?

SEXUAL ABUSE IS A FORM OF PHYSICAL ABUSE

Any situation in which you are forced to participate in unwanted, unsafe, or degrading sexual activity is sexual abuse. Forced sex, even by a spouse or intimate partner with whom you also have consensual sex, is an act of aggression and violence. Furthermore, people whose partners abuse them physically and sexually are at a higher risk of being seriously injured or killed.

EMOTIONAL & FINANCIAL ABUSE: OCCURS MORE THAN YOU THINK

When people think of domestic abuse, they often picture battered women who have been physically assaulted. But not all abusive relationships involve violence. Just because you're not

battered and bruised doesn't mean you're not being abused. Many men and women suffer from emotional abuse, which is no less destructive. Unfortunately, emotional abuse is often minimized or overlooked—even by the person being abused.

Understanding emotional abuse

The aim of emotional abuse is to chip away at your feelings of self-worth and independence. If you're the victim of emotional abuse, you may feel that there is no way out of the relationship or that without your abusive partner you have nothing.

Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse such as yelling, name-calling, blaming, and shaming. Isolation, intimidation, and controlling behavior also fall under emotional abuse. Additionally, abusers who use emotional or psychological abuse often throw in threats of physical violence or other repercussions if you don't do what they want.

You may think that physical abuse is far worse than emotional abuse, since physical violence can send you to the hospital and leave you with scars. But, the scars of emotional abuse are very real, and they run deep. In fact, emotional abuse can be just as damaging as physical abuse—sometimes even more so.

Remember, an abuser's goal is to control you, and he or she will frequently use money to do so. Many of the abusers want and find ways to make the victim dependent on them and this can easily be done with finances. **Financial Abuse** includes:

- Rigidly controlling your finances.
- Withholding money or credit cards.
- Making you account for every penny you spend.
- Withholding basic necessities (food, clothes, medications, shelter).
- Restricting you to an allowance.
- Preventing you from working or choosing your own career.
- Sabotaging your job (making you miss work or calling you constantly while there)
- Stealing from you or taking your money.

HOW YOU CAN HELP SOMEONE THAT IS BEING ABUSED

If you suspect that someone you know is being abused, speak up! If you're hesitating—telling yourself that it's none of your business, you might be wrong, or the person might not want to talk about it—keep in mind that expressing your concern will let the person know that you care and may even save his or her life. Here are a few suggestions when helping someone that may be the victim of abuse:

Do:

- Ask if something is wrong.
- Express concern.
- Listen and validate.
- Offer help.
- Support his or her decisions.

Don'ts:

- Wait for her or him to come to you.
- Judge or blame.
- Pressure her or him.
- Give advice.
- Place conditions on your support.

Talk to the person in private and let him or her know that you're concerned. Point out the things you've noticed that make you worried. Tell the person that you're there, whenever he or she feels ready to talk. Reassure the person that you'll keep whatever is said between the two of you, and let him or her know that you'll help in any way you can.

Remember, abusers are very good at controlling and manipulating their victims. People who have been emotionally abused or battered are depressed, drained, scared, ashamed and confused. They need help to get out, yet they've often been isolated from their family and friends. By picking up on the warning signs and offering support, you can help them escape an abusive situation and begin healing.

HELPFUL PHONE NUMBERS

A Woman's Place (Urbana, IL) 217-384-4390

BETHS Place (Tuscola, IL) 217-253-2555

Dove Offices:

Clinton, IL 217-935-6619

Decatur, IL 217-423-2238

Monticello, IL 217-762-3899

Sullivan, IL 217-728-9303

Family Service TeleCare (Champaign, IL) 217-352-5100

Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence: 1-888-345-3990

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)