



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Frequently Asked Questions

kingdom workers.

Domestic Violence FAQ

What is domestic violence (also called domestic abuse, intimate partner violence or relationship abuse)?

It is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in a relationship.* A pattern of behaviors means that the abuse is something that regularly occurs. It may be something that happens weekly or only twice a year, but it continues to happen throughout the relationship. Abuse is not an anger issue. It is about one person wanting to assume all control of the other person and the relationship. This may include what the victim wears, what job they hold, and how much money they can spend. Abusive relationships are all about meeting the needs of the abuser without consideration of the partner.

How common is domestic violence?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one out of three women and men will experience abuse in their lifetime. About one out of four women and one out of nine men will both experience abuse and report that the abuse had a negative impact on their life.**

Is domestic violence only about physical harm?

It is any behavior that arouses fear, prevents a partner doing what they want to do, or forces them to behave in ways they do not want. It includes physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation. These abuses may occur singly, or several may occur together.

Are women more likely to be the victims in these cases?

In the course of a lifetime, men and women share about the same likelihood for abuse. Women, however, experience more severe forms of physical abuse.

Is the low-income population more prone to experiencing domestic violence?

Domestic violence does not discriminate and affects all socio-economic backgrounds and education levels. Relationships with more stressors, such as poverty, can see increased abuse.

Why do victims not seek help or leave the abuser?

This is an especially frequently asked question. Really, the question should be “why does the perpetrator abuse?” Abuse is about power and control, creating a situation where the abused is completely in the perpetrator’s control. Reasons victims stay are many and varied.

- Verbal or physical threats to harm or kill the victim if they leave
- Threaten to get custody of the kids/ remove the children from the victim

- Complete control of the finances so the victim has no resources available to use
- Threats to commit suicide if the victim leaves
- Threats to harm the victim's loved ones or pets if they leave
- Victim has no resources such as family or friends near them to help or doesn't trust the family and friends enough to tell them what is happening
- The abuser has made the victim feel worthless or "crazy" and reliant on the abuser
- Victims think the abuse is normal in a relationship
- Victims feel embarrassment or shame and do not want to admit to being abused
- The victim still loves the abuser and feels that if they act differently, the abuse will stop
- The victim's faith keeps them in the relationship. This may occur because of the person's beliefs that marriage, even an unfaithful one
- A Christian leader or friend tells them they must stay in the abusive relationship and pray harder or submit more.

What are warning signs to look for to recognize abuse?

Abuse is about control. Recognizing abuse means looking for signs that point to control.

- A friend gets in trouble with their partner for spending time with you
- They start dressing differently or frequently mention wearing clothes because it's what their partner likes
- They seem unhappy more often, but refuse to talk about it
- You feel uncomfortable when around the partner
- You see frequent cuts or bruises
- You hear the partner using rough language or putting down your friend
- The needs of the partner always come before the needs of your friend

What help can be offered to victims?

The answer is beyond a simple FAQ! The best thing you can do is believe what you hear, even if the abuser is your best friend or a close relative. Reach out to your local domestic abuse agency and ask for their help as you assist a victim.

What can be done if the victim denies there is a problem?

Denial is normal; who wants to admit that their relationship is difficult? Never push a victim to confide in you. Rather, build trust by showing an interest in how they are doing and by not judging anything they say. Trust building may take years before the victim is ready to talk. Be patient, and always be there, ready to listen.

Is tolerating abuse a part of being submissive to your spouse?

No. Abuse is about power and control in a relationship. Biblical submission is an active decision on the part of a wife. She *freely and willingly* submits to her husband as the leader of the family. In an abusive relationship, the husband takes away that freedom and willingness by forcibly demanding that his wife obeys his wishes.

What does God's word say about violence to others?

God's word is clear: "The LORD examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates" (Psalm 11:5).

What should be done if the victim continues to be physically abused and refuses to leave?

The average number of times a woman leaves her partner and returns, before leaving for good, is seven. A victim has many reasons for staying in an abusive relationship, not the least of which is safety. Research shows the intensity of domestic violence escalates when the abused person decides to leave the relationship, and the risk of homicide in a relationship is highest during a period of separation.

If the victim refuses to leave, support them in that decision! Help them prepare a safety plan so that they can be as safe as possible. Listen to their reasons for staying; do they mention road-blocks to leaving that you can help them manage?

Should I go to law enforcement and report the abuse?

No! Law enforcement provides only a short-term solution to the problem, and often, the abuser can make bail within 24 hours. You may inadvertently escalate the abuse if the abuser becomes angry or blames the victim for involving law enforcement. Only two circumstances warrant you making a call to law enforcement: 1) The victim asks you to do so 2) You believe a homicide or suicide will occur.

How do I build a trusting relationship with a victim of abuse?

Build a trusting relationship the same way you would with anyone else. Show an interest in the person and their wellbeing. Listen carefully and do not force your opinions or thoughts on them. Tell them you're there whenever they need you. Always follow through when you tell them you will do something.

In God's eyes, is it breaking the marriage vows to leave an abusive spouse?

This is a question best handled by a pastor because every situation is different. As Christians, we want to honor our marriage vow. We acknowledge that divorce always involves sin, the breaking of the marriage vow. A perpetrator of abuse is the one who, through violence, be it physical, emotional, or psychological, harms the very spouse he/she is to protect. In severe cases, the abuser has broken the marriage.

What can I do to help?

- Offer friendship and listen
- Believe
- Ask the victim how you can help
- Do what they ask of you, even if it means supporting them in staying or going back to the relationship
- Remind the victim they are a loved child of God – no matter what the abuser says
- Keep them in prayer

How can we encourage others to talk about their abuse?

You cannot. This is an incredibly personal decision; one the victim needs to make in their own time. By being available to listen, by not judging, and by refraining from giving advice, you will signal that you are a safe person to confide in.

Why is it important for a church to be ready to help survivors of abuse?

The Bible is clear about defending the oppressed and helping the weak. This is our privilege, to help one another! Research shows that when the faith community supports a survivor, s/he is more likely to have feelings of wellbeing (less depression or thoughts of suicide) and is more likely to leave an abusive relationship.

How can Kingdom Workers help congregations assist victims of abuse?

Our *Empowering Survivors of Relationship Violence* program gives congregations the training and materials needed to start a Survivor ministry that is safe and confidential. Along the way we provide a knowledgeable and experienced expert to help the congregation through every stage of the process. Because of our generous donors, this program is at no charge to churches.

Advocates. Churches may decide to make available trained advocates to their members. Advocates provide emotional and spiritual support to survivors who may be uncomfortable talking to a pastor. They also give the pastor a resource to use when he feels someone could use additional support. Kingdom Workers provides all the training needed to become an advocate.

How do I get more information about this program?

Program information is available online at kingdomworkers.com.

*National Domestic Violence Hotline. Thehotline.org/is-this-abuse/abuse-defined/. Accessed June 5, 2020

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief – Updated Release. Atlanta: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.