

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL NETWORK OF MONTGOMERY COUNTY (D.V.L.N.)

THE EDUCATION & AWARENESS COMMITTEE

THE EDUCATION/ AWARENESS/COMMUNICATION/HEALTH (T.E.A.C.H) NEWSLETTER

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OUR HISTORY: *The Domestic Violence Legal Network of Montgomery County (DVLN) was formed in 1986 by professional from law enforcement, the court system, and agencies working with victims of domestic violence (DV), for the purpose of sharing resources and expertise to serve victims more effectively.*

OUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: *DVLN strives to eliminate Domestic Violence (DV) in the community by whatever means available including, enhanced communications between victim of (DV) and county services in an effort to secure safety and relief; to work with DV victims to remove stumbling blocks in the their path to a more secure future; to keep the community informed by providing a clear profile of available services; to take action on behalf of DV victims through policy reform.*

SERIES OF ARTICLES: So that we may reach more victims of DV, DVLN 's Education and Awareness Committee (TEACH) has created a series of articles to offer a better understanding of DV; which impacts the lives of 1 in 4 woman and 1 in 7 men.

For previous articles go to: www.montcopa.org/dvln

INTRODUCTION: WHO CAN BE AN ABUSER? By Jan Biresch

- An abuser can be male or female.
- When we talk about abuse in the context of DV, we are talking about a person in a current or former intimate partner relationship or a family member, where one person needs to maintain “power and control” over another.
- The victim can be an adult or child.
- We define a family member as those who are related by blood, marriage, or affinity (in-law), and includes those from past relationships.
- There are four basic types of abuse include physical, emotional or psychological, sexual, and/or economic which are used singularly or in combination to gain power and control.
- This article is speaking to abusers, trying to educate them on acceptable versus unacceptable behavior; including a focus on resources for both parties, as well as, legal remedies for the victims.

SOME OF THE ARTICLES FOCUS ON “INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE” BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT MANY OF THE TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES USED TO MAINTAIN POWER AND CONTROL CAN BE USED WITHIN ALL TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS AS STATED ABOVE

Intimate Partner Violence: Tactics Used by Abusive Partners by Denise Flynn

Intimate partner violence/abuse is domestic violence by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship against the other spouse or partner. When we talk about intimate partner abuse we commonly know that it is a systematic pattern of behaviors in which there is an intimate, sexual relationship with another partner (current or former). It involves using abusive tactics, including physical, emotional/mental, psychological, economic and sexual abuses. It crosses all socio-economic lines (race, gender, LGBTQ, cultures, ethnicity, religions, economic status, etc.) and escalates over time. It is a crime! It will not “just go away.” Why? It is used in order to gain power and control over the partner and it is intentional!

Accordingly, the **National Coalition Against Domestic Violence** reports some staggering statistics: (<https://ncadv.org/statistics>):

On average, nearly 20 people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. During one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men.¹

Nationally, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have been victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

1 in 7 women and 1 in 18 men have been stalked by an intimate partner during their lifetime to the point in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed.

On a typical day, there are more than 20,000 phone calls placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide.

The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation increases the risk of homicide by 500%.

Intimate partner violence accounts for 15% of all violent crime.

Women between the ages of 16-24 are most commonly abused by an intimate partner.

19% of domestic violence involves a weapon.

Domestic victimization is correlated with a higher rate of depression and suicidal behavior.

Only 34% of people who are injured by intimate partners receive medical care for their injuries.

Almost half of female (46.7%) and male (44.9%) victims of rape in the United States were raped by an acquaintance.

Of these, 45.4% of female rape victims and 29% of male rape victims were raped by an intimate partner.

A look at the Power and Control Wheel will give a synopsis of types of abuse

The tactics used by an abuser to gain power and control over the victim can include one or more parts of the wheel and one action is not more or less impactful or important than the other.

Physical Abuse can entail – hitting, pinching, punching, kicking, pushing, twisting arms, strangulation, and various sexual abuse and crimes.

Using Coercion and Threats- Making or using/carrying out threats to do something to hurt the victim, threatening to leave, making victim drop charges, making victim do illegal things, threats to report to welfare or child services, to name a few.

Using Intimidation- An abuser may use threats of physical violence or making victim afraid by using looks, actions, gestures, smashing prized things. Destroying victim’s property, abusing pets, displaying weapons to provoke fear.

Using Emotional Abuse- Putting victim down in front of others and/or in public, making victim feel bad about herself, name calling, making her think she’s crazy, playing mind games, humiliating her and making her feel guilt, shame, doing these in front of her children, causing her children to do the same to her.

Using Children/Pets- Where there are children and/or pets involved, the abuser may use tactics to keep the victim under his control. For example threats to or involving the kids, physically or sexually hurting children or pets, threats to take them away from her, making her feel guilty about the children, using them to relay messages, using visitation to harass her, threats to kill or actual kill pets.

Using Isolation- Isolating victim from friends and family, says family and friends does not like him so therefore “we” will stay away from them, limiting outside involvement. Controlling what victim does, goes, sees, talks to, even what victim reads, using jealousy or privilege to justify actions.

Minimizing, Denying, Blaming- Abuser makes the victim feel like they are the blame for abuse, making light of the abuse, or not taking victim’s concerns seriously, saying the abuse did not happen, shifting responsibility for abusive

behaviors, saying victim caused abuse. Calling the police or authorities and making false claims of abuse by the victim to get the victim arrested (reversing the roles).

Using Male Privilege- male privileges given him by a male-dominated society: A male abuser (& in LGBTQ relationships – male-identified) may make all big decisions, acting like the master of the home/castle, being the one to define men’s and women’s roles, treating victim like a servant or sexually exploit victim, controlling finances and all other aspects of the relationship and victim has no/very little say.

Using Economic Abuse- An abuser may prevent the victim from obtaining or keeping a job, or cause her to lose her job & make her ask for money; take her money; she may not have access to financial info or bills, or even know how to pay bills or use income information.

A victim of intimate partner abuse/violence is at greater risk of harm when they try to leave or make positive changes in their lives. There are resources available to help the abuser as well as help the victim and family members. See **Resources** at end of this article.

[The differences Between Victims and Abusers](#) by Pauline McGibbon

Detecting abuse in intimate partner relationships or any abusive relationship, can be problematic, by its secretive nature, and at times the lines between abuser and abused can be blurred. Determining the primary abuser is especially difficult in relationships where the abuse is emotional, or coercive in nature, and there is not objective evidence such as police and medical reports.

However, the primary abuser is more likely to:

- Underreport, hide, minimize, or justify their abusive behavior
- Identify as the victim in the relationship, and accuse the true victim of manipulation, deception, and sometimes violence
- Label their partners' or family members' behavior as abusive, and feel they are being abused when their demands are not met
- Call their partners or family member crazy, bi-polar, suffering from mental illness, addiction etc.
- Label their victim as irrational, hysterical, lazy, and unreliable, without positive attributes
- Show little or no compassion to their victim and display their “self-righteousness” in all things.

Abusers feel powerless, they are bullies. They want to have power over their victim. They are insecure, needy, distrustful, jealous, hypersensitive, and with unrealistic expectations of a relationship. They often do not realize they are the predator.

Abusers seek validation for their behavior and victims can give that to them by allowing themselves to think that the behavior is an appropriate response, or one that they learned in childhood. They can reinforce the sense of entitlement that abusers feel by submitting to actions that are against their own best interest, could cause pain and have destructive consequences, for e.g., breaking the law with the abuser, or as told to by them.

The abuse victim, on the other hand, is more likely to:

- Underreport or hide abusive behavior from the authorities, families and friends
 - Not label abusive behavior as abuse but find other ways to label it, perhaps as stress related or alcohol induced, and continually make excuses for their behavior
 - Blame themselves in whole or part for the abuse, become ashamed because they are abused
- Can become emotionally reactive, so when they expect to be criticized and degraded, may do it first
- Describe their abuser in compassionate and sympathetic terms, always looking for rational explanations and trying to see the abuser's perspective, for e.g., the abuser is depressed, unable to find a job, was abused as a child
 - Absorb blame for the situation, and show self –doubt and changeability

Abuse victims too, often feel powerless, paralyzed, financially and emotionally dependent. They may have no meaningful relationships outside of their home. They also can be insecure, needy, distrustful, jealous, hypersensitive, and with unrealistic expectations of a relationship. They often do not realize they are the prey.

The main difference between the two behaviors is the willingness to change, to own up to the destructive behavior and to seek help to stop. Quite often, victims will seek help for themselves in order to help the abuser, or they believe

that if they can change, they will begin to meet the expectations and standards their partner/family member has set for them. But because these standards are movable, they are doomed to fail

We have all heard the old adage of “hurt people, hurt people”.

Abusers hurt because they are

- Emotionally dependent on their victim. This causes an inner rage that encourages the abuser to lash out. Because an abuser is so dependent, he takes control of his victim’s life. This is the way they deny weaknesses and make themselves powerful. They lash out in jealousy and possessiveness. They don’t have a good support network. If the victim leaves, they may go to extreme measures to get them back.
- Rigid gender attitudes and expectations, the victim must stay in their assigned role. To deviate results in hostility. Sharing of roles and responsibilities is not seen as part of a loving relationship
- Empathy deficient, they cannot put themselves in the shoes of another and feel compassion for them
- Feel entitled, want love and respect because they deserve it, rather than earn it
- Lack accountability, they do things because they can, and believe it’s OK to hurt someone because others do it
- self-destructive tendencies, they transfer their pain to others
- low self-esteem, they have difficulty believing they can be loved unconditionally and accepted by their partners
- emotionally immature, and unable to control their emotions, take responsibility, handle anger, disappointment, guilt, resentment, fear, jealousy or grief
- unaddressed trauma, perhaps complex childhood issues that have never been dealt with, or are self-medicated
- anti-social /sociopathic and narcissistic personality disorders – where self-centeredness, lack of empathy, poor impulse control prevent them from having deep and meaningful relationships, however often they try

Sexual Abuse in the Context of Domestic Violence by Jan Biresch

Intimacy plays an important role in many relationships, however, sexual abuse is just another power play. When we speak of sexual abuse we are talking about the following:

Using sexually explicit or derogatory language with partner to humiliate and degrade whether in private or in public is also a tactic creating an atmosphere of fear and shame.

Forced Sex- Just because you are in an intimate relationship you don’t own another person’s body. Some people believe that as part of a couple they have the right to sex acts when, where and how they want it. Abusers who use pressure, threats or force within a relationship is another form of abuse. Using inanimate objects during sex is also unacceptable.

Birth Control Sabotage-Another tactic an abuser may use to gain power and control relates to not allowing their partner to use birth control or putting a hole in a condom to make their female partner pregnant. This tactic is used to keep the victim present. A pregnant woman is a lot less likely to leave her abuser. Spreading a sexually transmitted disease-If an abuser has unprotected sex with his partner knowing that he has a contagious disease, this is also considered sexual abuse.

THERE IS SUCH A THING AS INTIMATE PARTNER AND/OR MARITAL RAPE

**IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU CARE ABOUT IS IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP MAKE A
CONFIDENTIAL CALL FOR SUPPORTIVE TIPS OR RESOURCES**

My Dad is a Batterer by Michele Kristofco

My name is Ryan, I am 17, and my dad is a batterer. There, I said it. It has taken me a long time to understand what is really going on in my family. People have always described my dad as a good ol' boy. You know the kind. Everybody likes him. He is the life of the party. He is always helping others, cracking jokes and making people laugh. This, I suspect, is exactly why my mom fell in love with him. The problem is that he was a totally different person at home.

I started crying myself to sleep when I was 4 years old. The sound of my dad screaming at my mother and the sound of her sobbing into her pillow, still haunts me today. The confusing part was how loving he always behaved the next day. Most people thought my parents had a perfect marriage, but that's only because they couldn't hear all the screaming at night. I started having nightmares when I slept and sometimes I couldn't focus in school because I was too tired or too worried about my mom. My grades slipped and that made my dad even angrier. He would belittle my mom saying that she was stupid and that her kid was stupid just like her. When mom would argue or stand up to him, my dad would take her purse or her car keys and sometimes even threaten to send me away. We were terrified of him.

When I was 7, I remember seeing my father back-hand my mother across the face because the biscuits were too dark on the bottom. I wished that they would fight in the bedroom like they used to instead of right in front of me. The very next day when he hit her again, I screamed at him to stop and that's when he hit me. My dad would not allow me to go to school for the rest of the week because of the black eye he caused. I also missed my best friend's birthday party that week because of the black eye. My dad said that I didn't have any friends so missing the party was "no big deal". I guess he was right because my friend didn't talk to me for a week for missing his party. I wanted to explain, but I was too afraid to say anything. If I told, my mom would be the one to pay. My teacher sensed there were problems at home and wanted me to see the school counselor, but my dad forced my mom to decline all school services.

We lived our lives on pins and needles until I had enough. By the time I was 10, I was angry and frustrated. I started picking fights with the other kids at school. I felt pretty tough when I made other kids cry. I learned how to do that by watching my dad. When I became a teenager, I started taking a lot of risks. I experimented with drugs and alcohol, taunted other kids, got into a lot of fights and stayed away from home as much as possible. I spent my first night in Juvenile Detention when I was 15. When I was 16, my dad killed my mom with his bare hands. For a long time, I thought it was my fault. I should have been there more, protected her more, stood up to my dad more. I wonder if I am just like my dad.

Ryan's father is currently being held without bail for murder. What Ryan doesn't know is what life might have been like if he were not a victim of domestic violence. Although Ryan's mom paid the ultimate price of domestic violence, Ryan has also suffered tragically for his entire young life. By no fault of his own, Ryan missed his opportunity for a happy childhood, engaging friendships, good grades, school sports, and extracurricular activities because of the impact of domestic violence in his life. Graduation with his peers and an opportunity for higher education remain at risk. A child, like Ryan, exposed to domestic violence can suffer lifelong irreparable damage. Studies have shown that exposure to violence can disrupt a child's normal neurobiological development. This can impair a child's memory, emotional regulation, and behavioral regulation. Chronic stress may cause some areas of the brain involved in anxiety and fear responses to overdevelop, while other areas of the brain under develop. Ultimately, a child exposed to violence and trauma has an increased likelihood for disease, disability, social problems and even early death as compared to those who have not experienced violence and trauma in their lives.

Clearly, we must do all we can to help Ryan and other children just like him. We must take steps to protect our children from the devastating potential future consequences of domestic violence. Act now, before it's too late. What we do for our children today helps them develop into healthy adults tomorrow.

Being abusive doesn't make you are a monster but without help you may become one!



Resources for Abusers:

Montgomery County Resource: The late Chuck Gallun, mentor and predecessor would say “In domestic violence, the victim needs help, and the perpetrator needs help”. David Rothwell, a Licensed Professional Counselor in Pennsylvania serves as the clinical supervisor for a batterers intervention program (BIP) for offenders through Creative Health Services, department of Family and Community Justice Services: Prevention and Intervention programs.

The SAFE Project (Stop Abuse Foster Empowerment) is a BIP designed for identified domestic violence offenders, we provide education to help decrease violent, controlling behavior. Developing new patterns of behavior through healthy relationship skill building is part of this process. Participation may be court mandated or voluntary. Individual, courts and/or probation may refer.

Contact Us:

Creative Health Services

11 Robinson Street, Pottstown, PA 19464

Phone: 610-326-9250

www.creativehs.org

Philadelphia County Resource: MENERGY is a 35-year-old counseling and therapy program for people who have been verbally or physically harmful in relationships. The program starts with a careful assessment and recommendations for treatment that fits each person’s needs. The program teaches clients to monitor internal tension, diminish reactivity and develop strategies for containing outbursts. But the real work is to help people learn humility and assertiveness, fair problem-solving, negotiation skills, and accountability. Clients gain insight into how their personal and relationship histories drive some of their abusive behaviors, and explore the roots of their abusive actions as they work to change in the present.

Contact info: 2000 Hamilton St. Suite 304 Phila., PA 19130 Phone: 215-242-2235 Fax: 215-242-3974 www.menergy

Bucks County Resource: The SAFE Counseling Program, Inc. aka Supportive Alliance for Family

Empowerment or Support Alliance is affiliated with the Peace Center, a peace education and violence prevention non-profit organization that serves Bucks County and the larger Philadelphia area. The SAFE Counseling Program, Inc. teaches men, women and youth how to stop violence and abuse, and how to create the life they love. Supportive Alliance provides individual and group treatment in a safe and supportive environment with a focus on preserving the safety, dignity and humanity of all with the ultimate goal of ending violence by teaching clients sustainable ways to be responsible for their own behavior, and to build and maintain safe and nurturing relationships, homes, workplaces and communities. Supportive Alliance treats court-referred and self-referred clients by applying a trauma-sensitive, resilience-focused approach, backed by research and decades of experience. Find Supportive Alliance at www.supportivealliance.com or www.thepeacecenter.org. Phone: 215 750 0323.

MAKE THE CALL TO STOP DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



For confidential domestic violence, sexual assault, or child abuse help or resources:

Do Not Hesitate to CALL 911 In Case of an Emergency or Dangerous Situation!

Laurel House Hotline: 800-642-3150 Women's

Center Hotline: 800-773-2424

Victim Services Center: 888-521-0983

Office of Children and Youth: 610-278-5800

PA Child Abuse Hotline: 800-932-0313

Montgomery County Domestic Relations: 610-278-3646 (Child support issues)

Contributors are all members of the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Legal Network/T.E.A.C.H.

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New articles and resources will be published three times a year by The Domestic Violence Legal Network and can be accessed at: www.montcopa.org/DVLN

See newsletter at bottom of DVLN home page for previous articles