

Domestic Violence

Definition

Domestic violence (also referred to as intimate partner abuse) is a crime.

It results from an imbalance of power and control over one's partner.

Domestic violence is primarily committed by men against women but also occurs in same sex relationships and by women against men.

All survivors are not physically battered or beaten.

Abuse can include other forms of mistreatment and cruelty such as constant threatening, psychological/emotional, sexual, financial/material, spiritual and verbal abuse.

In the event of a sexual assault within domestic situation the client has the same options as any other person who has a complaint of sexual assault.

Gays, lesbians, transgender, immigrants and Native Americans may experience additional forms of abuse.

Partner abuse happens to many women at all income and education levels, in all social classes, in all religions, racial and cultural groups.

Violence or abuse can happen at the beginning of a relationship, after many months or years, or even after the relationship has ended.

And it can happen whether or not drinking or other substances are involved.

Abusive partners often blame their actions on the victim.

Remember that domestic violence is the fault of the person who commits it.

What are the effects of domestic violence?

Victims of domestic violence may experience a range of emotions. Initially, some may be shocked by what happened, and find it hard to grasp how someone they love could abuse them.

Other emotions may include shame, fear, anxiety, confusion, anger, depression, isolation, and grief.

A sense of violation, powerlessness, and loss of trust are experienced by many victims.

Victims of domestic violence may withdraw from others.

Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem are very common.

Possible Health Effects

Most health care providers are aware of the physical injuries that can occur during a domestic violent situation, however other common effects of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Acute Anxiety
- Depression
- Hypertension

- Headaches
- Suicidal ideation
- Eating disorders
- Sexual dysfunction

- Irritable bowel syndrome
- Gastrointestinal pain
- Obsessive Compulsive disorder
- Chronic Vaginal/urinary infections
- Children Witnessing Abuse

In Canada, it is estimated that 800,000 children are exposed to woman abuse each year.

When children witness abuse they are receiving the messages that violence is okay and therefore a normal part of a relationship, it is a way to resolve conflict and to gain power and control over another human being.

The impact of witnessing abuse depends on the age and developmental stage of the child, the frequency and severity of the abuse along with the supports systems in place for the child.

Typical Long-Term Effects Woman Abuse has on Children

- Disruption in eating and sleeping routines
- Poor concentration
- Low self-esteem

- Being abused or becoming abusive
- Fearful of loud noises
- Fear
- PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome)
- Suicidal behavior
- Delays in development
- Separation anxiety
- Self-harm
- Disrespect for females
- Excessive crying
- Frequent illness
- Bullying
- Physical neglect
- Hitting, biting
- Depression
- Poor peer relationships
- Clinging
- Perfectionism
- Running away
- Anger and Aggression
- Problems in school
- Feeling over-responsible
- Cruelty to animals
- Inappropriate sexual behavior
- Pleasing behavior
- Regressive behavior
- Alcohol/drug use
- Anxiety and Tension
- Destruction of property

Children are affected by abuse on many different levels:

- Emotionally (anxiety, anger, depression, low self-esteem)
- Physically (difficulty sleeping/eating, health problems)
- Socially (poor social skills, peer rejection)

- Cognitively (developmental delays, poor school performance)
- Behaviorally (aggression, tantrums, immaturity)

Help is available for victims of domestic violence.

Where can I get help?

Police

Police respond to reports of possible criminal offenses or from people who are in immediate danger.

They investigate offenses and make arrests where appropriate.

Police apply for peace bonds to protect you if you have good reason to believe that someone will harm you or your children.

Police also provide you with information about other agencies that may be able to help.

Victim Services

Victim services are located in community agencies or police stations.

Services include emotional support, justice system information, safety planning, referrals to counseling and other services and support to victims going to court.

Victim services also help you by providing information and application forms for crime victim assistance benefits and victim notification.

If you or someone you know is in a violent relationship, tell someone you trust and find out what you can do to get help.

What about reporting to the police?

You may wish to report domestic violence to the police.

Involving the police and justice system is critical to becoming safe and stopping the violence.

It may also play an important role in the healing process.

A support person can be with you when you report a crime to the police.

You can get help from victim services and other agencies, whether or not the police are involved.

If you are unsure about reporting to the police, you may find that talking with a victim service worker helps in making this decision.