

National Domestic Violence Awareness Month October, 2004

Background

Domestic Violence Awareness Month evolved from the first Day of Unity observed in October, 1981 by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The intent was to connect battered women's advocates across the nation who were working to end violence against women and their children. The Day of Unity soon became a special week when a range of activities were conducted at the local, state, and national levels.

These activities were as varied and diverse as the program sponsors but had common themes: mourning those who have died because of domestic violence, celebrating those who have survived, and connecting those who work to end violence.

In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed. That same year the first national toll-free hotline was begun. In 1989 the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month Commemorative Legislation was passed by the U.S. Congress. Such legislation has passed every year since with NCADV providing key leadership in this effort.

Information adapted from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Website

Additional Information

What is Battering?

Battering is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Battering happens when one person believes they are entitled to control another.

Definitions: Abuse of family members can take many forms. Battering may include emotional abuse, economic abuse, sexual abuse, using children, threats, using male privilege, intimidation, isolation, and a variety of other behaviors used to maintain fear, intimidation and power. In all cultures, the perpetrators are most commonly the men of the family. Women are most commonly the victims of violence. Elder and child abuse are also prevalent.

Battering escalates. It often begins with behaviors like threats, name calling, violence in her presence (such as punching a fist through a wall), and/or damage to objects or pets. It may escalate to restraining, pushing, slapping, and/or pinching. The battering may include punching, kicking, biting, sexual assault, tripping, throwing. Finally, it may become life-threatening with serious behaviors such as choking, breaking bones, or the use of weapons.

Predictors Of Domestic Violence

The following signs often occur before actual abuse and may serve as clues to potential abuse:

1. Did he grow up in a violent family? People who grow up in families where they have been abused as children, or where one parent beats the other, have grown up learning that violence is normal behavior.

2. Does he tend to use force or violence to "solve" his problems? A young man who has a criminal record for violence, who gets into fights, or who likes to act tough is likely to act the same way with his wife and children. Does he have a quick temper? Does he over-react to little problems and frustration? Is he cruel to animals? Does he punch walls or throw things when he's upset? Any of these behaviors may be a sign of a person who will work out bad feelings with violence.
3. Does he abuse alcohol or other drugs? There is a strong link between violence and problems with drugs and alcohol. Be alert to his possible drinking/drug problems, particularly if he refuses to admit that he has a problem, or refuses to get help. Do not think that you can change him.
4. Does he have strong traditional ideas about what a man should be and what a woman should be? Does he think a woman should stay at home, take care of her husband, and follow his wishes and orders?
5. Is he jealous of your other relationships—not just with other men that you may know—but also with your women friends and your family? Does he keep tabs on you? Does he want to know where you are at all times? Does he want you with him all of the time?
6. Does he have access to guns, knives, or other lethal instruments? Does he talk of using them against people, or threaten to use them to get even?
7. Does he expect you to follow his orders or advice? Does he become angry if you do not fulfill his wishes or if you cannot anticipate what he wants?
8. Does he go through extreme highs and lows, almost as though he is two different people? Is he extremely kind one time, and extremely cruel at another time?
9. When he gets angry, do you fear him? Do you find that not making him angry has become a major part of your life? Do you do what he wants you to do, rather than what you want to do?
10. Does he treat you roughly? Does he physically force you to do what you do not want to do?

Checklist

Look over the following questions. Think about how you are being treated and how you treat your partner. Remember, when one person scares, hurts or continually puts down the other person, it's abuse.

Does your partner....

___ Embarrass or make fun of you in front of your friends or family?

___ Put down your accomplishments or goals?

___ Make you feel like you are unable to make decisions?

___ Use intimidation or threats to gain compliance?

___ Tell you that you are nothing without them?

- ___ Treat you roughly - grab, push, pinch, shove or hit you?
- ___ Call you several times a night or show up to make sure you are where you said you would be?
- ___ Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse for saying hurtful things or abusing you?
- ___ Blame you for how they feel or act?
- ___ Pressure you sexually for things you aren't ready for?
- ___ Make you feel like there "is no way out" of the relationship?
- ___ Prevent you from doing things you want - like spending time with your friends or family?
- ___ Try to keep you from leaving after a fight or leave you somewhere after a fight to "teach you a lesson"?

Do You...

- ___ Sometimes feel scared of how your partner will act?
- ___ Constantly make excuses to other people for your partner's behavior?
- ___ Believe that you can help your partner change if only you changed something about yourself?
- ___ Try not to do anything that would cause conflict or make your partner angry?
- ___ Feel like no matter what you do, your partner is never happy with you?
- ___ Always do what your partner wants you to do instead of what you want?
- ___ Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you broke up?

If any of these are happening in your relationship, talk to someone. Without some help, the abuse will continue.

Adapted from Reaching and Teaching Teens to Stop Violence, Nebraska Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Coalition, Lincoln, NE.

Information adapted from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Website