

Unit 10. Domestic Violence

What Is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive (controlling) behaviors people use against their intimate partners. These behaviors may include physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and financial abuse. Partners may be married or unmarried; heterosexual, gay, or lesbian; or living together, separated, or dating.

Physical assault (hitting, pushing, shoving), sexual abuse (unwanted or forced sexual activity), and stalking are types of domestic violence that involve criminal behavior. Although financial and emotional/psychological abuse are not criminal behaviors, they are forms of abuse and can lead to violence.

Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior that establishes power and control over the victim through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence. Unlike stranger-to-stranger violence, the threatening or physical violence is repeated against the same victim by the same offender. Patterns of domestic violence vary in frequency and degree of violence. Repeated physical domestic violence is called battering.

Domestic violence may begin with threats, acts of violence witnessed by another person (such as punching a fist through a wall), or damage to objects or pets. Victims may be given a limited amount of money to spend. The offender may tell the victim what clothing the victim is “allowed” to wear, where the victim is “allowed” to go, and who the victim is “allowed” to talk to. Keep in mind that it is illegal to prevent an adult from leaving a room or house.

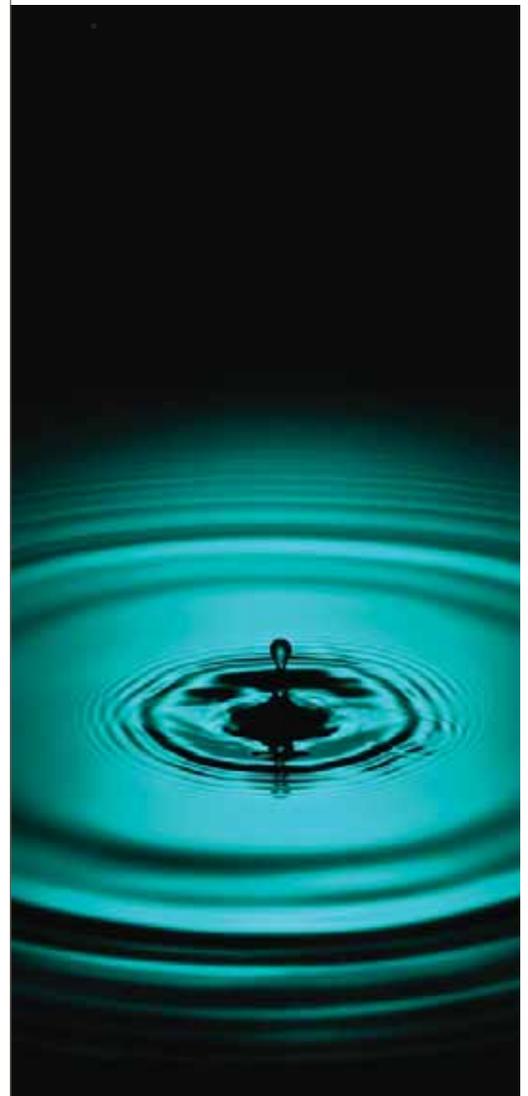
Domestic violence may escalate to physical behaviors such as restraining, pushing, slapping, and pinching. It may escalate further to include punching, kicking, biting, sexual assault, tripping, and throwing. Finally, the violence may become life threatening and cause serious injury, such as choking or breaking bones—or even death.

Stalking may also be present in a domestic violence situation. This behavior includes following, spying, unwanted calling/writing, accosting, harassing, and threatening. Most state laws include this language: Any person who engages in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that places that person, or their family, in reasonable fear for their safety, is guilty of the crime of stalking (NIJ 1993). The impact on victims includes loss of sleep, weight loss, depression, anxiety, and difficulty concentrating.

Anyone can be a victim. Victims can be of any age, sex, race, culture, religion, education, employment, or marital status. Although both men and women can be abused, most victims are women. Children in homes where there is domestic violence are more likely to be abused and neglected. Most children in these homes know about the violence. Even if a child is not physically harmed, he or she may have emotional and behavioral problems. Long-lasting effects on children include sleep problems, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, lack of trust, anger, inability to form partnerships, substance abuse, and increased risk of becoming either a victim or an abuser themselves.

Words To Know

- Battering
- Coercive
- Control
- Cycle of violence
- Denial
- Escalation
- Intimate
- Intimidation
- Psychological
- Obstacle
- Stalking
- Tactic





In the News: Domestic Violence Trends

Domestic violence is a growing problem in our country today. It can have a lasting impact on victims and their families. Take a look at the information about domestic violence below. How do these trends make you feel?

- Women make up approximately three-quarters of the victims of homicide by intimate partners.
- Women make up the majority of victims of nonlethal domestic violence.
- Women are victims of intimate partner violence at a rate about five times that of men.
- Domestic violence is most prominent among women ages 16–24.
- For both men and women, divorced or separated persons are subjected to the highest rates of intimate partner victimization, followed by never-married persons.
- Best estimates indicate as many as 1 in 20 women will become targets of stalking behavior at least once during their lifetimes.
- Children of abused mothers are 57 times more likely to be injured during domestic violence incidents compared with children of nonabused mothers.
- Children who witness domestic violence are two-thirds more likely to become perpetrators or victims themselves.
- In homes where partner assault is reported, the risk of child abuse is higher.

The Cycle of Violence

Those who have studied domestic violence believe that it usually occurs in three general stages—referred to as the “cycle of violence.” First, the abuser uses words or threats, perhaps humiliation or ridicule. Next, the abuser explodes at some perceived “mistake” by the other person, and the abuser becomes physically violent. Finally, the abuser “cools off,” asks forgiveness, and promises that the violence will never occur again. At this point, the victim often gives up on leaving the violent situation or having charges brought against the abuser. Typically, the abuser’s rage begins to build again after the reconciliation, and the violent cycle may be repeated.

The **Violence Wheel** (at right) shows the relationship of physical abuse to other forms of abuse. The wheel was developed after victims described common control tactics abusers used. The center of the wheel represents the intention of all violent tactics: to establish power and control. Each spoke of the wheel represents a particular tactic. The rim of the wheel—which gives it strength and holds it together—is physical abuse.



*Created by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 206 West Fourth Street, Duluth, MN 55806; 218-722-4134.

Examples of Domestic Violence

Many definitions of domestic violence are used in civil and criminal law. The following general definition is used in many states: Domestic violence is a pattern of coercive behavior designed to exert power and control over a person in an intimate relationship through the use of intimidating, threatening, harmful, or harassing behavior. This definition recognizes that domestic violence includes multiple forms of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, and economic. The following examples show different types of domestic abuse, some of which are crimes and some of which are not. As you read each story, consider the impact of the crime on the victims.

Physical Abuse (Attempted Murder)

May include holding down, hair pulling, poking, grabbing, pushing, shoving, locking in or out of the home, subjecting to reckless driving, refusing to help when sick or injured, kicking, biting, hitting, slapping, choking, strangling, burning, throwing or hitting with objects, using a knife or gun.

Buck stabbed Tracey 13 times in the chest, shoulders, neck, and face. As she lay in the backyard in a pool of blood, Buck kicked Tracey's head with his booted foot, ran into the house and snatched up her 2-year-old son, C.J. He then dashed outside, stuck the terrified child in Tracey's face and screamed, "I've killed your rotten mother!" Then, as the police officer at the scene remained frozen in indecision, Buck kicked Tracey's head for a second time. The young mother, her neck broken, lapsed into a coma. She did not wake up for 8 days.

What are some of the physical, emotional, and financial effects of this crime on Tracey's life? How might her son be affected?

Sexual Abuse (Sexual Assault)

May include constant sexual demands, unwanted sexual acts, unwanted and uncomfortable touching, rape or incest, sadistic sexual acts, demeaning sexual remarks, forcing family members to see pornographic materials, wanting sex after abuse, forcing the victim to have sex with others, forcing the victim to become pregnant or have an abortion.

Kristy and Jim had been living together for 4 years. During the past year, Kristy became more and more upset with his drinking and controlling behavior. One night, in a drunken rage, Jim slapped and kicked Kristy. She left and moved in with her parents. Several weeks later, Jim apologized and asked Kristy to dinner at his house with the goal of getting back together. Later that night, after Kristy said she was unwilling to continue their "live-together" relationship, Jim attacked Kristy, stripped off her clothes, and forcefully raped her, all the while insisting, "You know you want me!"

In what ways did Jim harm Kristy?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

Emotional/Psychological Abuse

May include yelling, name calling, threatening to hurt or kill, degrading women in general, criticizing appearance, belittling accomplishments, constant blaming, apologizing and making false promises to end the abuse, offering false hope, isolating the victim from others, ridiculing, criticizing, blaming, neglecting physical or emotional needs, ignoring, withholding affection, abusing pets, accusing the victim of having affairs, monitoring conversations, making the victim account for time spent, criticizing friends and family, embarrassing the victim in front of others, undermining the victim's authority with children, constantly calling the victim.

Juanita and Jose have been married for 2 years and recently had their first child. Since the birth, Jose has repeatedly called Juanita names, including "fat pig," "ugly whore," "worthless mother," and other degrading names. Jose told her that she was lucky she was married to him because no one else would want her.

What is your reaction?

Four horizontal lines for writing.

The verbal abuse always got worse when my partner was drunk or high. The abuse never got physical, but the cruel words broke my spirit.

—Domestic violence victim

Economic Abuse

May include taking or breaking phones, controlling money/bank accounts, withholding child support, destroying property, taking or disabling the car, taking keys/purse, quitting or losing jobs, running up debts, sabotaging the victim's work or school.

Jean and Nancy are partners who have lived together for the past 8 years. Nancy refuses to allow Jean to work outside the home. All financial matters are controlled by Nancy, and she gives Jean a small weekly allowance for personal items. Jean recently enrolled in college classes so that she could get a "good job" in the future. Upset, Nancy destroyed Jean's college textbooks and ordered her to quit college.

How would you feel if Jean were your sister?

*His violent behavior affected me,
our kids, even my coworkers.*

—Domestic violence survivor

Impact on Children (Physical Abuse)

May include physical or sexual abuse, emotional neglect, financial neglect, threatening to harm the children, using children as “pawns,” trying to get children to “take sides,” physically harming the partner in front of the children, degrading and humiliating their partners in front of the children, threatening to or actually cutting off financial support for children in the event that the partner leaves.

Danielle and Michael have been married for 3 years and have a 2-year-old daughter, Maya. One night, Michael came home and was angry because dinner wasn't ready. As Maya looked on, Danielle and Michael argued, Michael got angry and punched Danielle several times in the face. He also kicked her twice in the chest. Watching her mother being attacked, Maya began crying and screaming. Michael picked her up by her hair and threw her to the floor, yelling at her to “shut up!”

What do you think Maya thinks and feels?

Reasons Victims Stay

Many obstacles can prevent a victim from leaving an abusive relationship. Most victims of domestic violence repeatedly attempt to leave the relationship, but return when they cannot overcome the obstacles, which include—

- Economic dependence.
- Fear.
- Isolation.
- Low self-esteem.
- Beliefs about family or marriage.
- Emotional feelings toward the offender.
- Belief that only the victim can stop or help the abuser.
- Thoughts that the abuser will find the victim.
- Lack of options.
- Threats against others.
- Health concerns.

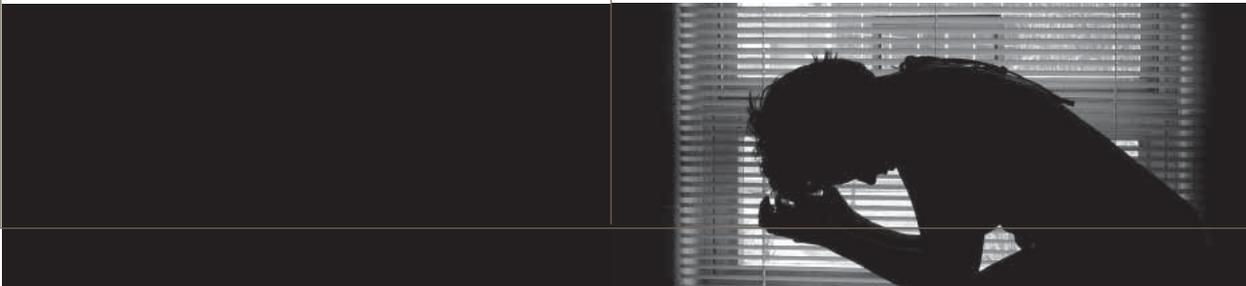


What Is the Impact of Domestic Violence?

The following lists outline some examples of how domestic violence affects financial, physical, emotional, and religious/spiritual areas of victims' lives. Add your own examples below.

People ask me, "Why didn't you leave?" I love that question. Why doesn't anyone ever ask, "Why did he hit you?" What he did was against the law. When a woman stays, she is not breaking the law.

—Domestic violence victim

<p>Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal fees • Inability to care for family • Poverty • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical injuries • Problems sleeping • Loss of life • _____ • _____ • _____
<p>Emotional</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability • Suicidal feelings • Loss of self-respect • Panic attacks • Inability to meet emotional needs of children • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>Religious/Spiritual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Why would this happen to a good person?" • Won't leave relationship for religious reasons • Marriage is for "better or worse" • _____ • _____ • _____
	



Victim Impact: Listen and Learn

After viewing the OVC *Victim Impact: Listen and Learn* DVD clip about domestic violence, answer the following questions:

What was the emotional and physical impact of domestic violence on Rebel?

Domestic violence is a crime that escalates in severity and violence. What did Rebel feel was the turning point in the relationship when she knew she had to leave?

How did domestic violence affect Rebel's relationship with her family and friends?



Being Accountable for Your Crimes

Domestic violence has serious physical, emotional/psychological, and financial effects on its victims. The physical injuries can be severe, and they usually get worse over time. Some domestic violence episodes end in homicide. Domestic violence often comes from a person the victim trusts. Feeling betrayed may cause more pain than the physical injuries. The victim's sense of control and trust has been harmed, leaving her or him feeling very vulnerable. The experience of violence makes it difficult for victims to have healthy relationships with others. In addition, many victims are financially dependent on their abusive partners, and if they leave, sometimes with children, they have little financial support.

No one, regardless of the circumstances, has the right to use violence or abuse to control, intimidate, or harm another person.

How Can I Be Accountable for My Crimes?

I treated her like she was my property. I don't have any right to do that.

—Vince

I scared my girlfriend, in front of our kid. Saying I was sorry wasn't enough.

—Jean

I now know it starts with me yelling. I have to control my anger.

—Patrick

I told her it would never happen again . . . but it did. I have to mean it when I say it.

—Perry

Additional Activities

Activity B – Violence Wheel

Refer to the Violence Wheel on page 64 of your workbooks. Write one or two sentences that demonstrate a specific example of each of the power and control tactics illustrated on the wheel. Also, write about how a victim might feel when the tactic is used.

Sample

Tactic: Using isolation

Example: The victim is dropped off at work and picked up every day. She is not allowed to drive herself to work or ride with anyone.

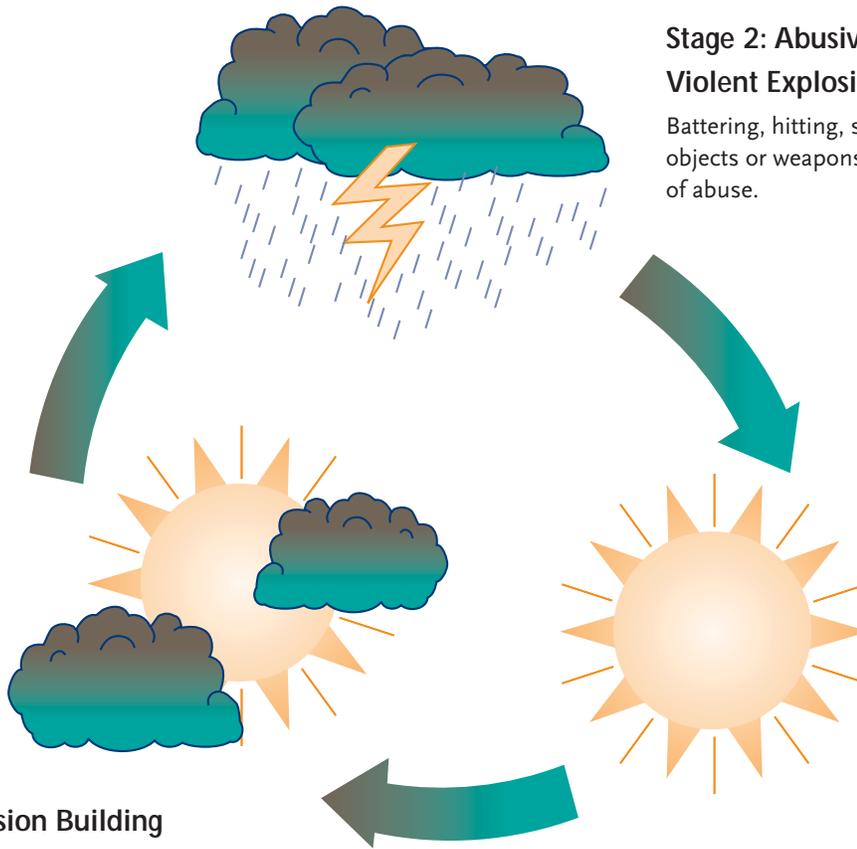
Victim's Feelings: Powerless, alone

Tactic: _____

Example: _____

Victim's Feelings: _____

Activity C – Cycle of Violence



Stage 1: Tension Building

Increased tension, anger, blaming, arguing.

**Stage 2: Abusive Incident/
Violent Explosion**

Battering, hitting, slapping, kicking, choking, use of objects or weapons. Sexual abuse. Verbal threats of abuse.

**Stage 3: Honeymoon
Period**

Calm stage (length of this stage may decrease over time). Denial of violence, saying they are sorry, promising it will never happen again.

With time, the cycle will occur more frequently and the abuse during the violent episode will become more severe. The cycle stops only if the perpetrator gets counseling and learns alternatives to being violent, if the victim leaves the relationship, or if the victim is killed.

What are some examples of how the batterer acts during each of the three stages?

What is the victim going through physically and emotionally during each stage?

If any children are present in the home, what are they going through physically and emotionally during each stage?
