

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic abuse is a pattern of behavior which is used to control another person through fear and intimidation and threats of and/or actual violence. The batterer usually feels entitled to control another person. Battering may include emotional, economic, sexual, or physical abuse. Emotional abuse can take the form of using children, threats, intimidation, isolation, and other fear tactics to gain control. Women, children, and elderly people are usually the victims of domestic abuse. Battering often begins with a pattern of behavior that escalates from name calling and threats to physical violence. It can be life threatening.

There are many theories as to why batterers become abusive. They include mental illness, alcoholism, family dysfunction, and poor communication skills. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (www.ncadv.org), the batterer begins and continues the behavior because violence is an effective method for gaining and keeping control over another person, and the batterer usually does not suffer adverse consequences as a result of the behavior.

Why do people stay in abusive relationships? When a person stays in an abusive relationship it is not because they lack strength of character. Often financial reasons and lack of independence keep a battered person in the relationship. Many times people stay because they are afraid they will be harassed, hurt worse, or killed if they leave. The abused person may not have a network of emotional or financial support for leaving. A mixture of love and manipulation often keeps an abused person in the relationship.

CHECKLIST

If you are concerned about the pattern of behavior in your relationship, or that of someone you know, use this checklist and the resources that follow.

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, punch, shove, or hit you?
- Call you often when you are at work or at home because he or she doesn't trust what you are doing?
- Use drugs or alcohol as an excuse to insult you or physically abuse you?
- Blame you for how he or she feels or acts?
- Pressure you sexually?
- Make you feel like there is no way to end the relationship?
- Prevent you from doing things you want?
- Try to keep you from leaving?
- Act charming and pleasant between periods of abuse?

Do you:

- Sometimes feel scared of how your partner will act or react?
- Constantly make excuses to others for your partner's behavior?
- Believe that you can help your partner change if 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 instead of what you want to do?
- Stay with your partner because you are afraid of what your partner would do if you left?

RESOURCES

Call the Department of Human Resources Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault toll free hotline: 1-888-235-5333 for resources in your area. For general information and for tri-county area resources, visit: www.co.multnomah.or.us/dchs/dv/dvman.

If you would like to discuss these issues, or if you need additional referral resources, call the Oregon Attorney Assistance Program for confidential help.

Shari R. Gregory
OAAP Program Attorney