

Basic Information

It is important for us to realize how painfully common intimate partner violence is. As leaders in this church we want to be equipped to support anyone involved in an abusive relationship. IPV is not a simple problem, so there are no simple answers. Our role is to empower the person being abused to make their own choices with respect to the relationship and to offer loyal support throughout that process.

Definition

IPV is any willfully abusive behavior carried out by one partner against another. The abuse can be verbal, physical, mental, and/or emotional and can also include sexual assault, isolation from friends and family, and/or controlling the victim's resources. Some relationships include occasional violent altercations involving both partners. More often there is a pattern of abuse by one partner against the other with the goal to maintain power and control in the relationship.

Some Important Things to Know

- One in three women experience IPV at some point in their lives.

Each relationship is unique; however there are some common patterns:

- Violence tends to escalate over time. Abusive relationships usually not violent at all in the beginning, but there is a pattern of smaller controlling behaviors.
- Violence tends to be carried out in a cyclical pattern of increased stress followed by a violent incident followed by apologies and promises to change.
- Victims hesitate to tell others about their situation because of shame or fear of further violence if they do. They may fear that others will not understand, not take it seriously, or even blame them for being in that situation.

Risk Factors

IPV affects people of every age, race, class, religion, gender, etc. There are, however, some for whom there is greater risk:

- Women who are single, separated, or divorced
- Women who have recently sought a restraining/vacate order
- Teens and young adult women
- Women who are pregnant and have been previously abused
- Women whose partners are excessively jealous or possessive
- Women who abuse alcohol or other drugs, or whose partners do (details below)
- Women with disabilities
- **Women who are known to have recently disclosed that they are in an abusive relationship**

Substance abuse is a common enough factor in abusive relationships that it is worth a few additional comments. Women who abuse alcohol and/or drugs are at a greater risk for domestic violence. For women dealing with both domestic violence and substance abuse, it is often the violence that came first, and the substance abuse developed as a response to their victimization. These women face additional challenges in getting help because of stigma related to their substance abuse issues. They also face the personal challenge of gaining sobriety in addition to safety.

Warning Signs

This list of warning signs is from The National Women's Health Information Center.

There are clear signs to help you know if you are being abused. If the person you love or live with does any of these things to you, it's time to get help:

- monitors what you're doing all the time
- criticizes you for little things
- constantly accuses you of being unfaithful
- prevents or discourages you from seeing friends or family, or going to work or school
- gets angry when drinking alcohol or using drugs
- controls how you spend your money
- controls your use of needed medicines
- humiliates you in front of others
- destroys your property or things that you care about
- threatens to hurt you, the children, or pets, or does hurt you (by hitting, beating, pushing, shoving, punching, slapping, kicking, or biting)
- uses or threatens to use a weapon against you
- forces you to have sex against your will
- blames you for his or her violent outbursts

How to Help

Here are some guidelines for initial conversations with someone who is in an abusive relationship. They assume that you are certain abuse is happening and that the person being abused is ready to talk about it. The goal is to help this person (and any children) be safe, including leaving the relationship altogether if necessary.

Guidelines for you

Don't work alone. If someone in your care is in an abusive relationship, confer with a peer (pastors) or supervisor (ministry leaders) to support you as you offer help.

Involve professional help. Connect with community resources that have experience helping people leave abusive relationships. They can guide us on how to be cautious and not put the person we are trying to help at greater risk.

Guidelines for your conversations

Find time and space to talk privately. Yes, you are involving others in the process, but it is also important to find a private time to talk through what's happening in the relationship.

Listen. Let them say what they need to say without jumping ahead to what you're going to do about it. They have to decide when it is time to act.

Express your concerns. Be honest about any fears you have for their safety. Show your genuine love and concern for their well-being.

Offer support. Let them know that you are committed to your own relationship with them and that you're ready to support them whatever their choices with respect to the relationship. You want to make sure that they will remain safe.

Recognize that there are good reasons *not* to leave. Lack of resources (personal and external), concern for own and/or children's safety, fear of being unsupported, or a desire for the good parts of the relationship to continue

If they're not ready to end the relationship, go over ideas for remaining safe while still in the relationship. Let them know your availability to continue processing what's happening as needed.

If they are ready to end the relationship, connect with local resources and work on safety planning as outlined below. Allow them to grieve the loss of the good parts of this relationship.

Practical Help

This information is for you to give to the person in an abusive relationship.

In case of emergency, call 911.

If you are hurt, go to the emergency room.

Obtain a protective order. Contact your family court for information about getting a court order of protection. Once you have it, carry it with you, keep a copy in a secure place, and notify the police if it is violated. Note that it should include your workplace as well.

Change your locks. If you are staying at home and you have a protective order against your partner, consider changing the locks. Make sure your children know not to open the door for anyone and that your neighbors know about the protective order.

Make a safety plan. Gather important items to have ready if you need to leave quickly. You'll want to have: money, identification, important personal documents, keys, etc. For a full list see: <http://4woman.gov/violence/planning/index.cfm>.

Research places to go. Contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline (800-799-SAFE) for a list of local shelters and other resources. Make sure that any place you consider going is unknown to your abuser.

Connect with someone you trust. You've reached out to a friend in the church, is there anyone else you want to include in this process?

Important Numbers

In an emergency, call 911.

National Domestic Violence Hotline www.ndvh.org	Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)
Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc. www.casamyrna.org	Safe Link 1-877-785-2020 TTY 1-877-521-2601
Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women's Service Group	617-248-0922
Asian Task Force against Domestic Violence www.atask.org	617-338-2355
Boston Police Department Domestic Violence Unit www.cityofboston.gov/police/divisions/dv_shelter.asp	617-343-4350 (headquarters)
National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life www.ncall.us	608-255-0539

Further Information

If you would like to learn more about domestic violence, here is a short list of websites. The publications offered by The National Women's Health Information Center are particularly helpful both for those who are in abusive relationships and those with friends who are.

Asian Task Force against Domestic Violence

www.atask.org

Boston Police Department (list of shelters)

http://www.cityofboston.gov/police/dv_shelter.asp

Family Violence Prevention Fund

www.endabuse.org

FaithTrust Institute

www.faithtrustinstitute.org

Jane Doe, Inc.

www.janedoe.org

National Center for Injury and Violence Prevention and Control

www.cdc.gov/ncipc

National Coalition against Domestic Violence

www.ncadv.org

Peace at Home, Inc.

www.peaceathome.org

Domestic Violence: The Facts Handbook

(order through Boston Public Health Commission 617-534-2687)

The National Women's Health Information Center

<http://4woman.gov>

Helpful Books

Adams, David. *Why Do They Kill?*

Bancroft, Lundy. *Why Does He Do That?*

Bancroft, Lundy. *The Parent As Batterer*

Brison, Susan. *Aftermath*

Livingston, David. *Healing Violent Men*

Fortune, Marie. *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited*

Fortune, Marie. *Keeping the Faith*

Ruther, Rosemary Radford. *Women and Redemption: A Theological History*