

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence is a **pattern** of coercive behavior/tactics used by someone against a current or former intimate partner in an attempt to gain or maintain **power and control**.

Domestic violence is more than just physical abuse.
What are some **other forms of abuse**?

- Sexual Abuse
 - May include: physically forcing sexual activity, coercing into sex using threats or intimidation, forcing sex with other partners, denying access to sexual or reproductive health resources
- Psychological Abuse
 - May include: making the victim feel like they are responsible for the abuse, making the victim feel crazy, minimizing or denying the abuse, using threats or intimidation tactics to exert control
- Economic (Financial) Abuse
 - May include: withholding funds, giving an “allowance”, interfering with job or credit, denying access to bank accounts

DID YOU KNOW?

1 in 4 women



& 1 in 7 men



have been the victim of *severe physical violence* by an intimate partner

What are some **myths & facts** about domestic violence?

Myths

- Domestic violence is an impulse control and/or anger management problem.
- Abuse is caused by mental illness or substance use disorders.
- The victim stuck around, so it couldn't have been that bad. The victim is probably exaggerating.
- It is easy for a victim to leave their abuser.
- Abuse only happens in certain "problem" families, ethnic minorities, uneducated, or poorer areas.
- Victims provoke the abuse.

Facts

- Abuse is driven by **a sense of entitlement** that says, “I have the right to have a relationship that is centered on getting *my* needs met & I have the right to do what it takes to *control* my intimate partner.”
- No one ever asks to experience abuse. The fault lies with the abuser, so it's important that we don't use language that blames the person suffering abuse.
- Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that affects millions of individuals regardless of age, economic status, race, religion, or education.
- An abuser *chooses* to abuse. It is a choice.

WHY DON'T THEY JUST LEAVE?

Leaving an abusive relationship **does not** always equal safety for the victim. There are many reasons why a victim may choose to stay in their relationship.

Instead of asking, "Why doesn't the victim leave?"
We should be asking, "Why does an abuser commit acts of abuse?"

DID YOU KNOW?

More than
70%

of domestic violence
murders happen
*after the victim has
gotten out.*

Nationwide,
an average of **3 women**



are killed by a current or
former intimate partner
every day.

What are some reasons a victim may **stay**?

- Abusers tend to not take responsibility for their behavior. It's very common that they minimize or deny the abuse, or blame the abuse on the victim. Victims may believe that if they caused the violence, they must also be able to stop it.
- Victims may believe that the offender will change. They may hope that the relationship will return to the way it has been during the good times. They want the abuse to end, not the relationship.
- Abuser's behavior may have altered the victim's sense of worth and self-esteem. The victim may feel like they deserve the treatment, likely because the abuser told them so. They may also believe that they won't ever find someone else to love them.
- Often, victims stay because they are made to believe they cannot function independently from the abuser — financially or otherwise. Financial abuse is a tactic used by abusers to ensure the victim cannot leave easily.
- The victim may not want to "break up their family," especially if they have children. Threats by an abuser to take the children are common and compelling.
- Abusers may threaten physical violence or even death if the victim leaves.

Wellspring cares. We can help.

Domestic violence and sexual assault are complex issues. Wellspring staff are available to help people process their experiences so they can determine what is right for them. This includes the development of a **safety plan**: a personalized, practical plan to remain safe while in a relationship, planning to leave, or after leaving.