

The Hidden Crime: Domestic Violence

One out of every four women in this country will suffer some kind of violence at the hands of her husband or boyfriend.

Very few will tell anyone--not a friend, a relative, a neighbor, or the police.

Victims of domestic violence come from all walks of life--all cultures, all income groups, all ages, all religions. They share feelings of helplessness, isolation, guilt, fear, and shame.

All hope it won't happen again, but often it does.

Are You Abused? Does the Person You Love...

- "Track" all of your time?
- Constantly accuse you of being unfaithful?
- Discourage your relationships with family and friends?
- Prevent you from working or attending school?
- Criticize you for little things?
- Anger easily when drinking or on drugs?
- Control all finances and force you to account in detail for what you spend?
- Humiliate you in front of others?
- Destroy personal property or sentimental items?
- Hit, punch, slap, kick, or bite you or the children?
- Use or threaten to use a weapon against you?
- Threaten to hurt you or the children?
- Force you to have sex against your will?

If you find yourself saying yes, it's time to get help.

If You Are Hurt, What Can You Do?

There are no easy answers, but there are things you can do to protect yourself.

- Call the police or sheriff. Assault, even by family members, is a crime. The police often have information about shelters and other agencies that help victims of domestic violence.
- Leave, or have someone come and stay with you. Go to a battered women's shelter--call a crisis hotline in your community or a health center to locate a shelter. If you believe that you and your children are in danger, leave immediately.
- Get medical attention from your doctor or a hospital emergency room. Ask the staff to photograph your injuries and keep detailed records in case you decide to take legal action.
- Contact your family court for information about a civil protection order that does not involve criminal charges or penalties.

Don't Ignore The Problem

- Talk to someone. Part of the abuser's power comes from secrecy. Victims are often ashamed to let anyone know about intimate family problems. Go to a friend or neighbor, or call a domestic violence hotline to talk to a counselor.
- Plan ahead and know what you will do if you are attacked again. If you decide to leave, choose a place to go; set aside some money. Put important papers together--marriage license, birth certificates, check books--in a place where you can get them quickly.
- Learn to think independently. Try to plan for the future and set goals for yourself.



Have You Hurt Someone In Your Family?

- Accept the fact that your violent behavior will destroy your family. Be aware that you break the law when you physically hurt someone.
- Take responsibility for your actions and get help.
- When you feel tension building, get away. Work off the angry energy through a walk, a project, or a sport.
- Call a domestic violence hotline or health center and ask about counseling and support groups for people who batter.

The High Costs of Domestic Violence

- Men and women who follow their parents' example and use violence to solve conflicts are teaching the same destructive behavior to their children.
- Jobs can be lost or careers stalled because of injuries, arrests, or harassments.
- Lives are lost when violence results in death.

Take a Stand!

- Reach out to someone you believe is a victim of family violence, or to someone you think is being abusive. Don't give up easily--change takes time. Ending the family's isolation is a critical first step.
- Urge organizations and businesses to raise community awareness by hosting speakers on domestic violence, launching public education campaigns, and raising funds for shelters and hotlines.
- Ask the local newspaper, radio station, or television station to examine the problem and publicize resources in the community through special features and forums.
- Most communities offer resources for victims of family violence. Check your telephone directory or ask a law enforcement agency.