

# DOMESTIC VIOLENCE / INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE (DVINDoc02A)

## Definition of Intimate Partner abuse: A pattern of abusing power for the purpose of controlling an intimate partner

- Partners may be: Male/Female Male/Male Female/Female
- Partners may be: Teens Young Adults Middle Age Adults Older Adults
- Partners may be: Married, Dating, Living together or not
- Abuse may be
  - **Physical acts of violence:** pushing, grabbing, pinching, hitting, kicking, slapping, choking, and other physical ways of hurting and controlling a partner
  - **Verbal and emotional abuse:** Verbal assaults, manipulative and/or controlling behaviors toward a partner which cause that person to feel afraid, confused, overwhelmed, threatened, powerless, “crazy,” inadequate, frustrated, rejected
  - **Sexual abuse:** forcing unwanted sexual acts or withholding sexual intimacy or making degrading comments about someone’s sexuality or attractiveness.
  - **Financial:** limiting access to money for the purpose of limiting resources available
  - **Intimidation:** using gestures or actions to make someone feel afraid
  - **Interference with personal liberties:** detaining someone or preventing another person from going somewhere, talking to someone, or doing something.
  - **Willful deprivation:** withholding food or other critical resources to control someone.
  - **Stalking:** following or pursuing someone who has asked to be left alone
  - **Harassment:** persistent phone calls, conversations, or other behavior that the other person has requested to stop.

## **Participants in Partner Abuse are:**

**Victim** – The person upon whom the abuse is perpetrated

**Abuser or Perpetrator** – The person who behaves in ways that are intentionally designed to maintain control of and power over, the victim

**Witness** – The person who observes the controlling behaviors of the perpetrator upon the victim.

-Often the only witnesses are the children

-Sometimes neighbors see or hear the abuse

-All of us see the results upon individuals and society

**Social Institutions, groups, and individuals** that perpetuate beliefs and practices which allow domestic violence to continue

**Social Institutions, groups, and individuals** that raise community awareness of the problem of DV, provide safety and support for the victim and child witnesses, and treatment for the perpetrator.

## **INSIDE THE HOME – THE PEOPLE (DVINdoc02B)**

### *The Abuser*

The abuser believes he has the right to control his partner in any way he chooses. He doesn't believe anyone will stop him. He does it because it is the way he has learned to restore his feeling of powerfulness when he is feeling insecure, unsure, confused, frustrated, small, intimidated. Abusiveness is not a lack of control. It is not an illness. **Intimate Partner Abuse is a learned pattern of behavior. It is intentional.**

The abuser chooses his partner to be his victim because he can get away with it inside the home or in other secluded places. He can't abuse his boss or his minister. He would be stopped.

He chooses how he exerts control according to what will be most effective with his particular partner at this particular time. He chooses when, where, and how much.

There is no typical abuser profile. He may be rich or poor, educated or not. He may be your neighbor, your doctor, the chairman of the church board, etc. He is often respected and admired by the persons he has daily contact with outside the home.

### *The Victim*

Because each victim is also a unique individual with no specific profile, the issues which each person is facing, will be unique to her situation. The amount and kind of help she will need will depend on:

- The severity and complexity of the situation
- The strength of her natural support system – friends, family, church Community
- The amount and accuracy of the information she has about domestic violence
- The severity of the abuse and how long it has been happening
- How well she has learned to cope with stress

Some victims of partner abuse are able, without professional counseling, to maintain a strong sense of self, safely set clear limits with their abuser, and/or separate from the abuser. Others need counseling over a short period of time just to regain their equilibrium, feel again a sense of worthiness, and believe in their own ability to keep themselves safe. Still others who have been severely abused over a long period of time, perhaps as a child as well as by several adult partners may need counseling over a period of months or years.

Some of the characteristics that **may** be seen in a woman who has been abused by her partner include:

- Lives in fear of: abuse to herself, abuse to the children, partner concealing children etc.....

- Believes she has no basic rights, not even the right not to be hit
- Accepts blame even when she has done nothing wrong
- Believes she is the only one who can help her partner
- Acts as a buffer between her partner and the rest of the world
- Minimizes the danger of her situation
- Believes (or wants to believe) that her partner will change
- Feels helpless – believes nothing she can do will make any difference
- Believes she is worth something only if she has a partner
- Has a low opinion of herself
- Doubts her own sanity
- Has difficulty focusing her thoughts
- Feels anxious and/or depressed, even suicidal
- Experiences flashbacks to abusive incidents
- Has headaches and/or other physical symptoms caused by stress
- Is tired
- Has difficulty eating and/or sleeping/Is sleep deprived
- Fears being lonely
- Turns to alcohol/drugs to numb the pain
- Is dependent on her partner for financial resources
- Doesn't have friends
- Has a difficult time talking about her own needs; may not be able to identify her needs but can be very specific about her partner's needs and preferences
- Is hyper-aware – always alert to the needs and moods of others

Or

The person you see may exhibit none of these characteristics in the setting in which you see her. She may appear confident, creative, self-reliant, and safe in all the arenas of her life except in her relationship.

When responding to a victim of intimate partner abuse, safety planning must always be the first priority.

***The Child Witness:***

Children learn what they live. An abusing partner probably learned to control and abuse from his parents. He will, in turn, teach his children to abuse. The mother may very well have grown up thinking that abuse and violence is “normal” in families. The children may come to the same conclusion. Children learn to abuse and to expect abuse from the role models, the behaviors, set by the parents.

All children who witness or experience abuse in their homes, no matter what their age, are affected in their growth and development.

They may

- Have trouble concentrating in school or be an over achiever
- Be overly complainant and cooperative
- Be impulsive
- Be aggressive or withdrawn
- Exhibit regressive behavior
- Believe they are responsible for the abuse
- Need help identifying abusive behaviors
- Show physical and emotional symptoms of stress
- Be afraid to bring friends home
- Live in a world of make believe

When children become teens, they are attracted to persons with whom they feel comfortable, relationships where they can behave in the ways they have learned. The young men look for young women they can control. The young women look for persons who require them to use the survival behaviors they have learned. They are at risk of being attracted to each other.

If children and teens are exposed to non-violent adult role models outside the home, are taught non-violent problem-solving skills, and experience the developmental successes that result in self-confidence, the cycle can be broken.