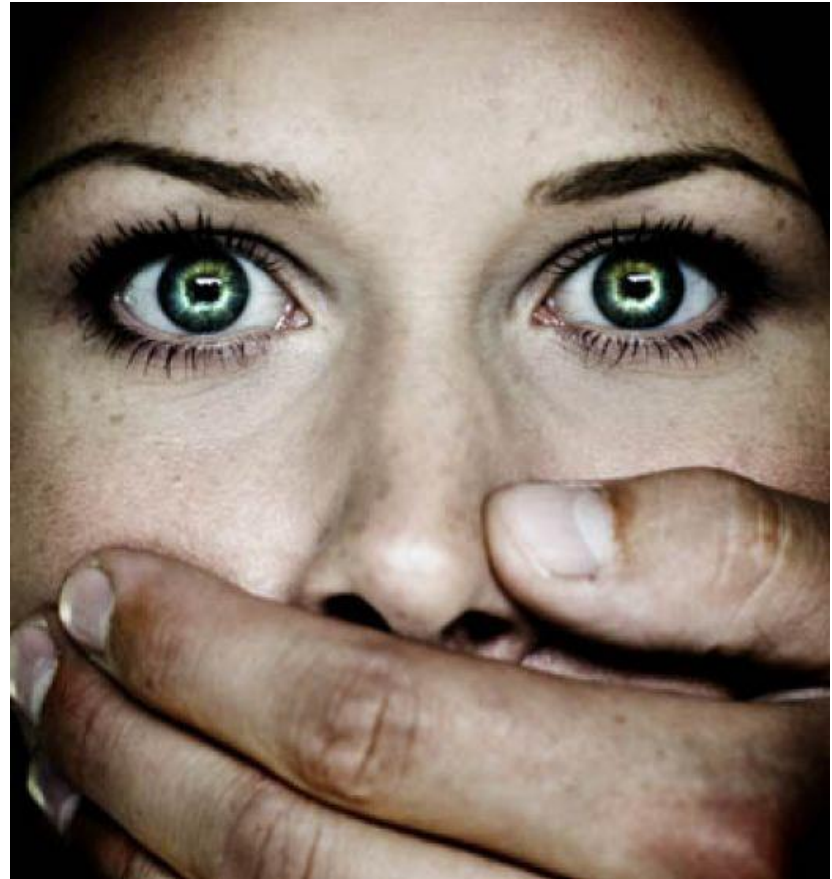


Domestic Violence: What You Need to Know

Domestic violence is the willful intimidation, physical assault, and/or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner against another.

Domestic violence results in physical injury, psychological trauma, and sometimes death. *The consequences of domestic violence can cross generations and last a lifetime.*



Did You Know?



One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime.

Both **men** and **women** can become victims of domestic violence.

Individuals who are **20-24 years of age** are at the greatest risk of violence.

Domestic violence can be **physical** and/or **emotional**.

Signs that You're in an Abusive Relationship

Does your partner:

- humiliate you or yell at you, often without just cause?
- criticize you and put you down?
- ignore or belittle your opinions or accomplishments?
- have a bad and unpredictable temper?
- constantly check up on you?
- act excessively jealous and display possessiveness?
- behave differently when you are alone together?
- control where you go or what you do?
- try to make you feel guilty for having a “life” (i.e. friends, interests) apart from the relationship?
- threaten to break up with you and then suddenly change their mind?

Signs that You're in an Abusive Relationship

Do you:

- feel afraid of your partner much of the time?
- feel more “free” to be yourself when they aren't around?
- avoid certain topics out of fear of angering your partner?
- feel that you can't do anything right for your partner?
- believe that you deserve to be hurt or mistreated?
- feel emotionally numb or helpless?
- find yourself making excuses to justify their behavior?
- feel crazy or wonder if you're the one who is crazy?
- **feel that you have changed, lost touch with who you are, or become someone else in order to be with your partner?**

About Emotional Abuse

- Emotional abuse is no less destructive than physical abuse, and is often *minimized* and *overlooked*.



- The aim of emotional abuse is to chip away at your feelings of self-worth and independence. If you're the victim of emotional abuse, you may feel that there is no way out of the relationship.
- Emotional abuse includes verbal abuse, such as yelling, blaming, and shaming. Isolation, intimidation, and controlling behavior also fall under this category.
- **Even if you are not being physically abused, your relationship could still be emotionally abusive. Most emotionally abusive relationships lead to physical abuse.**

Recognizing the Problem and **Taking Action**

- If you are in an abusive relationship, you may feel hopeless, depressed, and anxious. You may feel extremely powerless. Still, the only way to break the cycle of abuse is to **recognize that there is a problem** and to **tell someone immediately**.



Leaving an abusive partner can be **dangerous**. You may feel unsure if you have the emotional strength to go through with it. Your partner will likely reassure you that they are “changing.” However, the **vast majority of abusive partners have no desire to change and will never do so**. It is important to stay strong during this process.

If you are being abused, remember:

- You are not to blame for being battered or mistreated.
- You are not the cause of your partner's abusive behavior.
- You deserve to be treated with respect.
- You deserve a safe and happy life.
- You are not alone. There are people waiting to help.



MAKING THE DECISION TO LEAVE

Keep the following things in mind:

- *If you're hoping your abusive partner will change...*the abuse will probably happen again. Change can only happen once your abuser takes full responsibility for their behavior, seeks professional treatment, and stops blaming you, an unhappy childhood, stress, work, drinking, or their temper.
- *If you believe you can help your abusive partner...*the truth is that by staying and accepting repeated abuse, you're reinforcing and enabling the abusive behavior. Instead of helping your abuser, you're perpetuating the problem.
- *If your partner has promised to stop the abuse...*They may mean what they say in the moment, but their true goal is to stay in control and keep you from leaving. And most of the time, they quickly return to their abusive behavior once they've been forgiven and they're no longer worried that you'll leave.
- *If you're worried about what will happen after you leave...*You may be afraid of what your abusive partner will do, where you'll go, or how you'll support yourself. **But don't let fear of the unknown keep you in a dangerous, unhealthy situation. Leave and seek immediate help.**

Safety Planning

- **Know your abuser's red flags.** Be on alert for signs and clues that your abuser is getting upset and may explode in anger or violence. Come up with several believable reasons you can use to leave your home or residence hall (both during the day and at night) if you sense trouble brewing.
- **Come up with a code word.** Establish a word, phrase, or signal you can use to let your children, friends, neighbors, or co-workers know that you're in danger and that the police should be called.
- **Be ready to leave at a moment's notice.** Have emergency cash, clothing, and important phone numbers and documents stashed in a safe place (at a friend's res hall room, for example).



After You Leave:

- **Change your user names and passwords.** Create new usernames and passwords for your email, online banking, Facebook, and other sensitive accounts. Even if you don't think your abuser has your passwords, they may have figured them out.
- **Block them on Facebook, and de-friend any of their close friends.**
- **Change your phone number.**
- **If you're remaining in the same area, change up your routine.** Take a new route to class, avoid places where your abuser might think to locate you, change the times of any appointments they know about, and find new places to shop and run errands.
- **Do not stay in contact with your abuser.** Any contact will signal to them that you are not willing to leave them entirely. They will do anything to manipulate you at this time. **Don't** let them.



After You Leave (cont'd):



- **The scars of domestic violence and abuse run deep.** The trauma of what you've been through can stay with you long after you've escaped the abusive situation. Counseling, therapy, and support groups for domestic abuse survivors can help you process what you've been through and learn how to build new and healthy relationships.
- **Treatment and support from family and friends** can speed your recovery from emotional and psychological trauma. Whether the abuse happened years ago or yesterday, *you can heal and move on.*
- **Be gentle with yourself.** You deserve to be in a healthy relationship and to live a happy life. *You deserve a life free of control and abuse.*

Resources – Find Help



- UMass Center for Women and Community:
www.umass.edu/ewc or (413) 545-0883
- UMass Center for Counseling and Psychological Health:
www.umass.edu/uhs/counseling or (413) 545-2337
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233 (SAFE)
- Domestic Abuse Helpline for Men & Women: 888-743-5754
- Network/La Red (service focused on queer-identified women and trans-identified people): 617-742-4911
- Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project (service focused on all men who have sex with men): 800-832-1901