

Domestic Violence and Abuse

What Is Domestic Violence?

- Behavior used by one person to establish power and control over another person.



- It is done by making you afraid and threatening or using violence.
- It is a crime.
- It is important for you to know:
 - You are not alone.
 - You are not to blame.
 - You do not deserve to be abused.

Anyone Can Be a Victim

- Domestic violence can happen to anyone.
- It is not limited to a particular background or education level.
- Domestic violence affects everyone:
 - Family members
 - Friends
 - Coworkers
 - The community
- Children are being taught that violence is a normal part of life.
- They may be victims or abusers when they grow up.

There are many kinds of abuse:

- Physical
 - Hitting, grabbing, shoving, pinching, biting, hair pulling, burning, cutting.
- Emotional
 - Lowering self-esteem, constant criticism, name-calling, or hurting relationships with children and friends.
- Psychological
 - Threatening everyone around you.
 - Guilt. Saying things like, “If you loved me you would [wouldn’t] ...”.
- Sexual
 - Threatening or forcing sexual behavior without consent.
- Economic
 - Making someone dependent on them for money and support.
 - Not allowing education or work outside the home.

Abuse is not always easy to recognize.

- You may not think this behavior is wrong.
- You may think the person is just a strong personality.
- You may think you need direction.

What Can You Do if You Are a Victim?

- Make sure that you are safe.
- If you feel that you or your children are in danger, call 911 immediately.
- Get help.
- Change your situation.
- Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or (TDD) 1-800-787-2334.
- Do not be ashamed.
- Talk to a family member, a friend, your boss or a coworker, your doctor, someone in your church, or the police.
- Look in your phone book for hotlines, crisis centers, and shelters.
- Look for help on the Internet (See the Resources section for more information).



Develop a Safety Plan

(adapted from the Metro Nashville Police Department's personalized safety plan)

If you are still living in the bad relationship:

- Avoid rooms with no exits.
- Avoid rooms that may have weapons in them.
- Practice “safe” words that will not anger your partner if you have an argument.

- Teach your children how and when to dial 911.
- Make a list of people to call for help.
 - Remember these numbers.
- Make up a code word so the person you call will know you need help.
- Plan possible ways to get out of the house:
 - Take out the trash.
 - Walk the dog.
 - Pick up the mail.
- Pack a bag for an emergency:
 - Clothes
 - Money
 - Phone numbers
 - Hide the bag in a safe place where you can get it easily.



If you have already left:

- Call a shelter for battered women.
- Change your phone number and your door locks.
- Screen your calls at home and at work.
- Make and practice an escape plan in case you need it.
- Avoid staying alone.
- Change the places where you shop and your route to work.
- Share your problem with someone at school and work.
- Give them a picture of your abuser.

Important Things to Remember:

- Abuse is about power and control.
- If it feels wrong, it **IS** wrong.
- It is **NOT** your fault.
- You are **NOT** alone.
- You **CAN** get help.
- **YOU** deserve better.

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