



BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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Recognizing and Preventing Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is defined as behaviors used by one person in a relationship to gain control over the other. Over the past few decades, steps have been taken to identify and prevent domestic abuse; however it is still a relatively taboo topic. Many people believe that domestic abuse would never happen to them or someone they know. Quite a few abusers and victims rationalize the behavior and convince themselves that abuse isn't actually taking place. Abusers can seem like perfectly nice people outside of the relationship and victims often feel ashamed and therefore hide the abuse making it difficult for friends and family to identify. Finally, most cases of domestic abuse are never reported to the police.

It is important to remember that domestic abuse does not discriminate. It can happen regardless of age, race, culture, financial or employment status, or sexual orientation. Although abuse can seem more prevalent in couples that are married or living together because of proximity, it can occur when couples are dating and not living together and in teen relationships. There are two main types of domestic abuse:

Physical Abuse

When people think of domestic violence, physical abuse is often what comes to mind. Physical abuse occurs whenever

force is used. Examples of physical abuse include hitting, shoving, kicking, choking, grasping with force, hair pulling, burning with a cigarette, lighter, etc, or anything that results in physical discomfort. Sexual abuse is also a form of physical abuse. Being in a relationship does not give your partner the right to demand sex or demand you perform acts that you are not comfortable with. Physical/sexual abuse is the only form of abuse that is considered a crime and is punishable by law.

Emotional Abuse

This form of abuse is much more subtle because it doesn't leave any physical evidence, but it can be just as damaging. Abusers use emotional abuse to chip away at their partners feelings of self-worth and independence. This often makes the abuse victim feel like no-one else could ever love them and that they couldn't make it on their own, making it difficult to end the relationship. Examples of emotional abuse include yelling, name-calling, blaming, shaming, public humiliation, isolation, intimidation, manipulation and controlling possessive behavior. Financial or economic abuse is another form of emotional abuse used to control a partner's actions. Some examples of financial abuse include rigidly controlling a partner's finances, withholding money or credit cards or making a partner account for every penny you spent. Emotional abuse can severely impact a person's self esteem and well being and can often lead to physical abuse.

For more information or support on Domestic Violence, contact the work/life experts at **BalanceWorks®** by calling:

1.800.327.2255

eni's BalanceWorks® program is a confidential 24/7 service provided by your employer to help achieve work/life balance.





The first step in helping a loved one navigate an abusive relationship or getting yourself out of an unhealthy relationship is recognizing that abuse is taking place. When you love someone or have a lot invested in a relationship it can be hard to admit that abuse is taking place. However, if you experience any of the examples of abuse described above, if you are afraid of your partner, or if your partner makes you feel bad about yourself you are in an abusive relationship. Recognizing abuse in other people's relationships can be difficult, which is why it's important to know the warning signs.

Signs a loved one is being abused include:

- Acting afraid or anxious around their partner
- Going along with everything their partner says and does
- Checking in constantly with their partner to report where they are and what they're doing
- Receiving frequent, harassing phone calls from their partner
- Talking about their partner's temper, jealousy, or possessiveness
- Frequent injuries, with the excuse of "accidents"
- Frequently missing work, school, or social occasions, without explanation
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (e.g. wearing long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors).
- Being restricted from seeing family and friends
- Rarely going out in public without their partner
- Having limited access to money, credit cards, or transportation

How To Help

If you suspect that a loved one is being abused be sure to speak up. It is an extremely delicate situation but remember that this person probably feels very alone and afraid and may not offer the information freely. Be sure to speak with your loved one privately, tell them that you have noticed signs of abuse, that you are concerned, and that everything they tell you

is confidential. Never judge them or tell them that you will only support them if they leave their partner right away – this could backfire and actually make them feel more isolated and pressured. Tell your loved one that you will do whatever you can to help them. If they express an interest in leaving their partner, offer to conduct research, let them use your cell phone or computer to make plans or let them stay at your house until they get back on their feet.

Resources

The following hotlines are available to abuse victims:

**The National Domestic Abuse Hotline:
1-800-799-7233**

**The National Sexual Assault Hotline:
1-800-656-4673**

**The National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline:
1-866-331-9474**

There are also domestic violence shelters where abuse victims can seek refuge from their abusers. The locations are kept confidential and the shelters provide for basic needs including food and childcare. Many shelters are also able to refer abuse victims to other helpful community services such as legal assistance, counseling, support groups employment programs and financial assistance.

Additional resources and information on domestic abuse can be found at www.domesticviolence.org

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